Chronologie 2007

Dezember 2007

30.12.2007:

Der französische Präsident Nicolas Sarkozy begrüßt bei seinem Besuch in Kairo das Streben der arabischen Staaten nach Nutzung der Kernenergie an. Ägypten bietet er die Zusammenarbeit bei der friedlichen Nutzung der Kernenergie an.

27.12.2007:

Bei ihrem Treffen in Jerusalem sagt Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert seinem Gesprächspartner Präsident Machmud Abbas zu, dass die Irritationen der vergangenen Tage – gemeint sind die Pläne für die Erweiterung von Maale Adumim und Har Homa – die Endstatusverhandlungen über die zentralen Konfliktthemen nicht beeinträchtigen sollen. Olmert vermeidet es jedoch, die genannte Bautätigkeit ausdrücklich anzusprechen[1].

23.12.2007:

Die israelische Regierung beschließt in ihrem Haushaltsplan 2008 den Bau von zusätzlich 250 Wohneinheiten in Maale Adumim und 500 Wohneinheiten in Har Homa östlich bzw. südlich von Jerusalem. Dafür sollen 99 Millionen Neue Shekel (~ 17,7 Millionen Euro) zur Verfügung stehen. Am selben Tag treffen Außenministerin Tsipi Livni und der palästinensische Unterhändler Achmed Qureia zur Vorbereitung des nächsten Treffens zwischen Ehud Olmert und Machmud Abbas zusammen.

18.12.2007:

US-Präsident George W. Bush hat die Lieferung russischer Atombrennstäbe nach Iran begrüßt, wenn sie für zivile Atomkraftwerke gebraucht würden.

17.12.2007:

In der Nachfolge von Annapolis findet in Paris eine Geberkonferenz mit neunzig Delegationen statt. Dabei soll nach Auskunft von EU-Außenkommissarin Benita Ferrero-Waldner die bisherige Nothilfe für die Palästinenser, die seit Juni 2006 – nach der Wahl von „Hamas“ – unter der Bezeichnung vorläufiger Internationaler Mechanismus (TIM)“ läuft, auf eine langfristige Entwicklungshilfe unter dem Titel „PEGASE“ – Programme palestino-européen de gestion de l’aide socio-economique / Palästinensisch-Europäisches Programm zur Amtsführung der sozio-ökonomischen Hilfe“ – umgestellt werden. PEGASE ist umfassender („Regierungsführung“, „soziale Entwicklung“, „Wirtschafts- und Privatsektorenentwicklung“ sowie „öffentliche Infrastruktur“) und auf drei Jahre bis 2010 angelegt und ist im Gegensatz zu TIM nicht auf jeweils drei Monate befristet. Insgesamt erwarten die Palästinenser mehr als 7,7 Milliarden US-Dollar über den Zeitraum von drei Jahren. Davon will die Europäische Union allein 2008 rund 440 Millionen Euro übernehmen, hinzu kommen von Norwegen 140 Millionen US-Dollar, von Japan 120 Millionen US-Dollar, von den USA 555 Millionen US-Dollar, von Frankreich 350 Millionen Euro, Frankreich und Deutschland je 200 Millionen Euro, von Saudi-Arabien 350 Millionen Euro sowie von den Golf-Emiraten 200 Millionen Euro. Bis einschließlich 2010 stellt die Europäische Union Mittelbindungen in Höhe von 3,47 Milliarden US-Dollar in Aussicht. Während der Quartett-Beauftragte Tony Blair am 18. Dezember erklärt, dass mit den zugesagten Hilfen der Staat Palästina bis Ende 2008 aufgebaut werden könne, merkt der palästinensische Ministerpräsident Salam Fayyad an, dass das Geld zu siebzig Prozent für die Gehälter der rund 150.000 Angestellten der Autonomiebehörde und nur zu dreißig Prozent für den wirtschaftlichen und infrastrukturellen Aufbau eingesetzt werden

müsse. Am 21. Dezember begrüßte der UN-Sicherheitsrat in einer einstimmig verabschiedeten Erklärung die Ergebnisse der Pariser Konferenz als wegweisend[2].

16.12.2007:

Yossi Beilin kündigt an, dass er bei den parteiinternen Wahlen am 18. März 2008 nicht wieder für den Vorsitz von „Meretz/Yachad“ kandidieren werde. Er werde die Partei nicht verlassen und sich bei den nächsten Parlamentswahlen um einen Sitz bewerben. Beilin hatte die Arbeitspartei 2003 aus Enttäuschung darüber verlassen, dass ihm nur ein hinterer Listenplatz eingeräumt worden war. Er kündigte an, dass er Haim Oron bei den „primaries“ unterstützen werde. Auch die Abgeordneten Zahava Gal’on und Ran Cohen werden sich um den Vorsitz bewerben. Nach dem Bericht in „Yediot Achronot“ liegt die Zahl der Parteimitglieder bei 15.000 Personen, von denen 35 Prozent der „Kibbutz Artzi“-Föderation angehören. Der Leitartikel in „Haaretz“ verweist auf Beilins geringes Charisma, die Massen zum Enthusiasmus zu bewegen, bescheinigt ihm aber, die Politik auf seinen Weg eingeschworen und es nie aufgegeben zu haben, einen Partner auf der palästinensischen Seite zu erkennen. Gleichzeitig habe er die innenpolitische Agenda als Markenzeichen von „Meretz“ vernachlässigt: Trennung von Religion und Staat, Schutz von Minderheitenrechten, Freiheit der Informationsbeschaffung und der Meinungsäußerung, Schutz des Obersten Gerichtshofes, Gleichstellung von Mann und Frau[3]. Nach Ansicht von politischen Gefährten dürfte sich Beilin fortan wieder mehr um die Ideen der **„Genfer Initiative“** kümmern.

Yoav Stern berichtet in „Haaretz“ über eine in der Nähe von Madrid geplante Konferenz von israelischen und palästinensischen Friedensaktivisten, die bereits im Vorfeld abgesagt worden ist. Besonders der Streit über die Ein- oder die Zwei-Staaten-Lösung sowie die Beteiligung von Angehörigen von „Peace Now“ und der Arbeitspartei hätten die Konferenz verhindert[4].

Die „Jerusalem Post“ berichtet über das wachsende Einkommensgefälle in Israel. Während die Reichen immer reicher und die Armen immer ärmer würden, wachse die Zahl der letzteren. Im Jahr 2006 machten als arm eingestufte Angestellte 18,8 Prozent der Bevölkerung aus, 32,7 Prozent würden unterhalb der Einkommensgrenze liegen. Besonders hoch sei die Arbeitslosigkeit im „arabischen Sektor“. Während sie in einem arabischen Ort 20,9 Prozent betrage, liege der höchste Prozentsatz bei 9,4 in der jüdischen Ortschaft Kiryat Malachi (südöstlich von Ashdod)[5].

Unter der ironischen Überschrift „Lasst uns den Krieg nach Gaza tragen“ setzt sich Zvi Bar’el in „Haaretz“ kritisch mit Absichten zusammen, militärisch in den Gazastreifen zurückzukehren. Nachdem der Qassam-Beschuss und der Waffenschmuggel aus Ägypten schon aus der Zeit der israelischen Besatzung datierten und da die Erwartung entgegen allen Erfahrungen hinfällig sei, nach einer Intervention würden 1,5 Millionen Palästinenser gegen „Hamas“ rebellieren, bleibe für die Begründung einer Intervention nur das Prestige übrig, zumal da die Bewohner von Sderot keinen Krieg, sondern Schutz vor den Raketen wünschten. Ehud Olmert könnte seinen neuen Partner Machmud Abbas natürlich auffordern, dass der Beschuss aufhören müsse, doch dieser würde ihm antworten, dass genau dies das Ziel der Verhandlungen sei[6].

15.12.2007:

Zwischen 150.000 und 200.000 Menschen versammeln sich in Gaza-Stadt, um das zwanzigjährige Bestehen von „Hamas“ zu feiern. „Hamas“-Ministerpräsident Ismail Haniyeh erklärt, dass Israel nie anerkannt werde, und führt den Widerstand in Libanon, Irak und Afghanistan als Beispiele für den Erfolg gegen die dortige Besatzung an. In einer Botschaft aus Damaskus bestreitet der Leiter des Politischen Büros von „Hamas“, Khaled Meshal, das Mandat von

Machmud Abbas, mit Israel zu verhandeln. Das palästinensische Volk sei zu einer dritten und vierten „Intifada“ bereit.

15.12.2007:

Arabische Nachrichtenagenturen berichten, dass 21 iranische Parteien unter Führung der früheren Staatspräsidenten Akbar Hashemi Rafsandjani und Mohammad Khatami eine Koalition im Parlament bilden wollen, um die „ernste Krise“ im Lande zu beheben, die eine „unerfahrene Regierung“ ausgelöst habe.

14.12.2007:

Die „Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” berichtet aus einem ihr zugespielten Papier des Berliner Auswärtigen Amtes, wonach Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier bei seinen 44 Auslandsreisen 2008 „einen großen Bogen“ um den Nahen Osten machen wolle.

Yossi Sarid, früherer Vorsitzender von „Meretz“ in der Nachfolge von Shulamit Aloni, erklärt Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel zur „Frau des Jahres“ aufgrund ihrer Offenheit, russische und chinesische Menschenrechtsverletzungen zu kritisieren. Zur Politik Merkels im israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt äußert sich Sarid nicht[7].

Das „Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network“ mit Sitz in Kopenhagen kritisiert die Repressionen der syrischen Regierung gegen politische Dissidenten. Zu ihnen zählt Akram al-Bunni, der schon einmal 17 Jahre lang im Gefängnis gesessen habe, sowie dessen Bruder Anwar al-Bunni und seine Frau[8].

13.12.2007:

Arabische und palästinensische Investoren unter Führung Saudi-Arabien unterzeichnen in der jordanischen Hauptstadt Amman einen

Vertrag in Höhe von 200 Millionen US-Dollar zur Entwicklung von Bauprojekten in der Westbank.

In der Wochenausgabe der ägyptischen Zeitung „Al-Ahram (Die Pyramiden)“ berichtet Gamal Essam El-Din von einer wachsenden Zahl parlamentarischer Anfragen an die Regierung von Ministerpräsident Achmed Nazif. Während die Zahl der Multi-Milliardäre steige, müssten siebzig Prozent der Bevölkerung mit gerade einmal zwei US-Dollar pro Tag auskommen, und die Mittelkasse dünne aus. Andere Abgeordneter würden beklagen, dass die Regierung große Grundstücke an eine Handvoll Geschäftsleute mit engen Beziehungen zur regierenden Nationaldemokratischen Partei vergebe, dass die Regierung Abgeordnete mit Geldgeschenken besteche und dass private Monopole in der Zementproduktion entstanden seien. Ein weiterer Parlamentarier habe darauf hingewiesen, dass die Normalisierung der Arbeitsbeziehungen zu Israel viele israelische Spione nach Ägypten gebracht habe und dass dreizehn Prozent der ägyptischen Arbeiter in Israel heute Mitglieder der dortigen Armee und viele mit israelischen Frauen verheiratet seien[9].

12.12.2007:

Die in Annapolis vereinbarten Verhandlungen werden von der israelischen Regierung (Tsipi Livni) und der Palästinensischen Autonomiebehörde (Achmed Qureia) in Jerusalem mit der Diskussion über Verfahrensfragen aufgenommen. Die Gespräche werden durch die israelische Siedlungstätigkeit um Ost-Jerusalem belastet und die israelische Forderung, palästinensischen Militanten das Handwerk zu legen.

In Beirut wird François al-Hadj mit vier Leibwächtern ermordet. Der Brigadegeneral galt als Nachfolger von Armeechef Michel Suleiman, der als Kompromisskandidat bei den mehrfach gescheiterten Präsidentschaftswahlen antreten soll. Hadj hatte den wochenlangen

Aufstand seit dem 21. Mai im palästinensischen Flüchtlingslager Nahr al-Bared niedergeschlagen, bei dem 230 Mitglieder der radikal-islamischen „Fatah al-Islam“ und 168 Soldaten getötet worden sind. Für die Wahl Suleimans ist eine Verfassungsänderung notwendig. Am 21. Dezember scheitert der zehnte Versuch, einen neuen Staatspräsidenten zu wählen. Frankreichs Präsident Nicolas Sarkozy kappt am 30. Dezember die diplomatischen Beziehungen zu Syrien, bis Damaskus bereit sei, die Wahl des neuen Staatspräsidenten in Beirut zu gestatten. Am 2. Januar 2008 gibt die syrische Regierung den Abbruch ihrer diplomatischen Beziehungen zu Frankreich bekannt. Am selben Tag beschließt die libanesische Regierung eine Verfassungsänderung, die einem amtierenden Chef der Streitkräfte – in diesem Fall Suleiman – die Kandidatur zur Staatspräsidentschaft ebnet. Das Parlament muss dem Beschluss noch zustimmen.

Yoram Ben-Zeev, Israels neuer Botschafter in Deutschland, übergibt Bundespräsident Horst Köhler sein Beglaubigungsschreiben.

11.12.2007:

Amirama Golan berichtet in „Haaretz“ vom jüngsten Kongress der kommunistischen Partei „Demokratischen Front“ („Chadash“). Während sie früher eine arabisch-jüdische Partei gewesen sei, neige sich das Gewicht heute zu den nationalistischen und islamischen Kräften hin.

Das libanesische Parlament verschiebt zum achten Mal die Wahl des neuen Staatspräsidenten und setzt als neuen Termin den 17. Dezember fest. Wenn der maronitische Kommandierende General Michel Suleiman gewählt werden soll, muss zunächst Artikel 49 der Verfassung geändert werden, wonach der Kandidat zwei Jahre lang dem höheren öffentlichen Dienst angehört haben muss. Der bisherige Amtsinhaber Emile Lahoud war am 23. November aus dem Amt geschieden.

04.12.2007:

Akiva Eldar berichtet in „Haaretz“ über den Film „Eine Million Geschosse im Oktober“, der sich mit den israelischen Vorbereitungen auf den Ausbruch der zweiten „Intifada“ Ende September 2000 kritisch auseinandersetzt. In dem Film kommen mehrere Kabinettsmitglieder zu Wort, aus deren Äußerungen klar werde, dass das Militär erneut politische Entscheidungen überspielt habe[10].

Ein ägyptisches Gericht nimmt dreizehn Angehörige der Moslembruderschaft fest. Ihnen werden Verschwörung gegen die Regierung und illegale Tätigkeiten vorgeworfen. Zwei Tage später, am 6. Dezember, werden elf Studenten der Al-Azhar-Universität in Kairo, denen die Mitgliedschaft zur Moslembruderschaft vorgeworfen wird, festgenommen. Bereits am 19. November hatten die Behörden 25 Moslembrüder im Nildelta arretiert.

Das Weiße Haus in Washington kündigt an, dass Präsident George W. Bush am 9. Januar 2008 für drei Tage nach Israel und Palästina reisen werde, bevor er bis zum 16. Januar weiter nach Bahrein, die Vereinigten Arabischen Emirate, nach Saudi-Arabien und Ägypten reist. Der Besuch soll dem Vernehmen nach der Unterstützung der in Annapolis am 27. November unterzeichneten „Gemeinsamen Erklärung“ zur Wiederaufnahme der israelisch-palästinensischen Verhandlungen dienen. Bush war 1998 als Gouverneur von Texas zum ersten und letzten Mal in Israel.

Die US-Geheimdienste veröffentlichen einen Bericht, dass Iran sein Atomwaffenprogramm „mit hoher Sicherheit“ 2003 unterbrochen und bis Mitte 2007 offenkundig nicht wieder aufgenommen habe. Präsident George W. Bush bezeichnet den Bericht als Warnsignal, warnte aber davor, ihn zu ernst zu nehmen. Teheran sein Programm jederzeit wieder auflegen könne. Nichts habe sich geändert. Iran war und bleibe eine Gefahr.

03.12.2007:

Scott Mcconnell bricht in der Zeitschrift „The American Conservative“ eine politische Lanze für das Buch von John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt „The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy“ (London and New York 2007, Deutsch bei Campus 2007)[1]. Die Autoren würden für normale Beziehungen zwischen den USA und Israel plädieren und hätten damit eine landesweite Diskussion angestoßen. Ihr Ausgangspapier auf der Website der „John F. Kennedy School For Government“ in Harvard sei 275.000 Mal heruntergeladen worden[11].

US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice protestiert gegen den geplanten Neubau von 307 Wohneinheiten in der Siedlung Har Homa südlich von Jerusalem. „We’re in a time when the goal is to build maximum confidence between the parties and this doesn’t help to build confidence. There should not be anything which might prejudge final-status negotiations.” Der Baubeginn hatte im März/April 1997 (Regierung Benjamin Netanyahu) schwere Unruhen ausgelöst. In Har Homa sollen heute rund 6000 Menschen wohnen.

02.12.2007:

In der wöchentlichen Kabinettssitzung führt Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert aus, dass Israel die Verhandlungen mit den Palästinensern in der Hoffnung zügig vorantreiben werde, um bis Ende 2008 zu einem Abschluss zu kommen, dass es aber keine Verpflichtung auf eine feste Zeittafel gebe.

Nach palästinensischen Medienberichten plant die Autonomiebehörde, die 69 teilnehmenden Parteien der

[1] Dazu der Essay von Prof. Gert Krell in der Rubik „Rezensionen“ dieser Homepage.

Geberkonferenz am 17. Dezember in Paris um 5,5 Milliarden Euro für den Zeitraum von drei Jahren – also bis 2010 – zu bitten. Damit sollen vor allem ausstehende Verpflichtungen sowie die Gehälter der Regierungsangestellten bezahlt werden. Die „International Herald Tribune“ berichtet am 6. Dezember, dass die palästinensischen Bitten 5,8 Milliarden US-Dollar ausmachen, wovon siebzig Prozent für die laufenden Ausgaben des Haushalts einschließlich der 120 Millionen US-Dollar für Gehälter von Regierungsangestellten vorgesehen seien. Dreißig Prozent seien für Entwicklungsprojekte gedacht.

01.12.2007:
Nach dreijähriger Unterbrechung öffnen Syrien und Irak den größten Grenzübergang zwischen beiden Ländern.

November 2007

29.11.2007:
Die US-Administration drängt den UN-Sicherheitsrat, eine positive Erklärung zu den Ergebnissen von Annapolis abzugeben.

Der Generalsekretär des Exekutivkomitees der PLO, Yasser Abed Rabbo, verliest vor der UN-Vollversammlung in New York eine Botschaft von Präsident Machmud Abbas, in der dieser die Weltgemeinschaft beschwört, den Beginn ernsthafter Friedensverhandlungen als Ausfluss der „historischen Konferenz” in Annapolis zu unterstützen[12].

27.11.2007:
In Annapolis findet die eintägige internationale Konferenz zur Lösung des israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikts statt. Von israelischer

Seite nehmen Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert, Außenministerin Tsipi Livni und Verteidigungsminister Ehud Barak teil, von palästinensischer Seite Präsident Machmud Abbas. Syrien ist durch den stellvertretenden Außenminister Faisal al-Miqdad vertreten. Von den arabischen und moslemischen Staaten sind vertreten Ägypten (Mitglied des „Arabischen Quartetts"), Algerien, Bahrain, Jordanien (Mitglied des „Arabischen Quartetts"), Libanon, Mauretanien, Marokko, Oman, Qatar, Saudi-Arabien (Mitglied des „Arabischen Quartetts"), Sudan, Syrien, Tunesien, die Vereinigten Arabischen Emirate (Mitglied des „Arabischen Quartetts") und Jemen sowie Indonesien, Malaysia, Pakistan und die Türkei. Von deutscher Seite nimmt Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier als gegenwärtiger Vorsitzender der G-8-Staaten teil. Bush, Abbas und Olmert unterzeichnen zum Abschluss eine gemeinsame Erklärung[13]. Während US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice dem stellvertretenden syrischen Außenminister die Hand reicht und ihm für die Teilnahme dankt, beschuldigt Bushs Nationaler Sicherheitsberater Stephen Hadley am 30. November Damaskus, den Terror in der Region zu unterstützen. Gleichzeitig überlässt er es der israelischen Regierung, mit Syrien Verhandlungen aufzunehmen.

In einem Beitrag für die „Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" schreibt der frühere Außenminister Klaus Kinkel, dass er sich „einen fairen Interessenausgleich kaum anders vorstellen (kann) als im Rahmen des Friedensplans der **‚Genfer Initiative'**".

23.10.2007:

In Kairo treffen sich die Außenminister von elf arabischen Staaten im Rahmen der Arabischen Liga zur Vorbereitung der Konferenz in Annapolis. Es fällt auf, dass entgegen dem Skeptizismus unter den Teilnehmern der palästinensische Chefunterhändler Saeb Erakat die Erwartung äußert, dass die Konferenz nach sieben Jahren Stillstand – seit dem gescheiterten Gipfeltreffen in Camp David – dem Friedensprozess neues Leben einhauchen werde.

Nach der in letzter Minute erfolgten Vertagung der Wahl des neuen Staatspräsidenten in Libanon hat der gegenwärtige Amtsinhaber Emile Lahoud die Macht an das Militär übertragen, um die Sicherheit des Landes zu garantieren, wie er erklärt. Ministerpräsident Fuad Siniora bezeichnet den Schritt als verfassungsrechtlich nicht gedeckt. Parlamentspräsident Nabich Berri („Amal“[14]) setzt als neuen Termin den 30. November an. Für den ersten Wahlgang ist die Zweidrittelmehrheit vorgeschrieben. Hinter dem Machtkampf verbergen sich pro-westliche (Siniora) und pro-syrisch-iranische (Lahoud/Hisbollah) Loyalitäten.

20.11.2007:

In Jordanien finden Parlamentswahlen mit 984 Kandidaten in 45 Wahlbezirken statt. Von den 110 zu vergebenden Parlamentssitzen sind sechs Sitze für Frauen, neun für Christen sowie drei für Tscherkessen und Tschetschenen reserviert. Gegenwärtig sitzen 17 Abgeordnete der „Islamischen Aktionsfront“ im Parlament. Die versprochene Wahlrechtsreform, die das Ungleichgewicht der Chancen zwischen den ländlichen Räumen und den Städten und Flüchtlingslagern zu Ungunsten der letzteren beseitigt, hat nicht stattgefunden. Bei den letzten Wahlen am Juni 2003 gingen 58,8 Prozent der Bevölkerung zu den Urnen.

19.11.2007:

Nachdem am Vortag beim Treffen zwischen der israelischen und der palästinensischen Delegation keine Fortschritte erreicht worden sind, kommen Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert und Präsident Machmud Abbas zum achten Mal zusammen.

Die EU-Außenminister beschließen auf ihrer Sitzung in Brüssel ein Aktionsprogramm für die Palästinenser, das Hilfe für den Aufbau der Wirtschaft einschließlich der Berufsausbildung und für Polizei und

Justiz vorsieht. Bundesaußenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier spricht von einem „eindrucksvollen Programm“.

18.11.2007:

Die USA fordern Israel zu einem „totalen Siedlungsstopp” und zur Freilassung von erheblich mehr als 450 palästinensischen Gefangenen auf; diese Zahl beschießt das israelische Kabinett am selben Tag. In einem „non-paper“ verlangt die ägyptische Regierung als Bedingung für ihre Teilnahme in Annapolis die Wiedereröffnung des Orient House in Ost-Jerusalem, das früher als Zentrale der PLO in der Stadt galt, die Räumung der „illegalen Außenposten“ der Siedlungen und eine Verminderung der „checkpoints“ in der Westbank, um die Bewegungsfreiheit der palästinensischen Bevölkerung entscheidend zu erweitern. Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert sagt das Ende der Bodenenteignungen in der Westbank und die Räumung von „illegalen Außenposten“ zu, ohne die Forderung nach einem „totalen Baustopp“ erfüllen zu wollen. In den bestehenden Siedlungen würde weitergebaut, um dem „natürlichen Wachstum“ Rechnung zu tragen.

Das israelische Kabinett stimmt der Freilassung von 441 palästinensischen Gefangenen zu. Am 3. Dezember werden 429 Gefangene aus der Westbank und Gaza freigelassen.

Die „Jüdische Allianz für Gerechtigkeit und Frieden“ in den USA „Brit Tzedek v’Shalom“ appelliert an die US-amerikanischen Juden, jene Kräfte in der Politik zu unterstützen, die sich für echte Friedensbemühungen einsetzen, und ihre Skepsis zu überwinden. Nur dann lasse sich Geschichte verändern[15].

Beim Treffen zwischen Syriens Präsidenten Bashar Assad und Jordaniens König Abdullah II. in Damaskus betonen beide die Bedeutung einer gerechten und umfassenden Lösung für den israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt auf der Grundlage des

arabischen Friedensplans von 2002/2007 und internationaler Resolutionen. In dem Kommuniqué zum Abschluss des Treffens wird Syrien aufgefordert, für die Stabilität und Sicherheit Libanons zu sorgen sowie zwischen beiden Ländern normale Beziehungen auf der Basis des gegenseitigen Respekts und beidseitiger Interessen aufzubauen[16].

15.11.2007:

Präsident Machmud Abbas ruft in einer Radio- und Fernsehansprache aus Anlass des Jahrestages der Proklamation des Staates Palästina im November 1988 in Algier zum Sturz von „Hamas“ auf. „Diese Bande“ habe mit Waffengewalt den Gazastreifen genommen.

13.11.2007:

Das Treffen zwischen Außenministerin Tsipi Livni und dem palästinensischen Verhandlungsführer Achmed Qureia zur Vorbereitung der Konferenz in Annapolis endet ergebnislos. Während Qureia auf einer israelischen Verpflichtung besteht, sich auf die Grenzen von 1967 zurückzuziehen und der Etablierung der Hauptstadt Palästinas im arabischen Teil Jerusalems zuzustimmen, beharrt Livni auf der israelischen Absicht, eine allgemein gehaltene Erklärung vorzulegen.

In der Pressekonferenz mit Tsipi Livni in Jerusalem glaubt der Außenbeauftragte der Europäischen Union, Javier Solana, dass nach einem erfolgreichen Abschluss der Konferenz in Annapolis ein Vertrag zwischen Israel und den Palästinensern in acht Monaten erreicht werden könne.

12.11.2007:

Gegenüber dem Außen- und Sicherheitspolitischen Ausschuss der Knesset betont Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert, dass die israelische Delegation unter Leitung von Außenministerin Tsipi Livni versuche, zu allen Elementen einer Friedenslösung eine Verständigung zu erreichen, dass dies jedoch von der vorherigen Erfüllung der ersten Stufe der „Road Map“ des internationalen Quartetts abhänge. Beide Politiker erklären, dass die Konferenz in Annapolis nur einen Tag dauern werde.

Vor der Knesset betont Außenministerin Tsipi Livni, dass die Konferenz in Annapolis nach israelischer Auffassung lediglich anberaumt werde, um den Friedensprozess anzustoßen, nicht jedoch die zentralen Fragen zu klären. Gleichzeitig räumt Livni ein, dass die Palästinensische Autonomiebehörde Probleme habe, über die Westbank keine absolute Kontrolle habe. Indirekt kritisiert Livni den einseitigen Rückzug aus dem Gazastreifen: Es sei richtig, nach einer Vereinbarung mit den Palästinensern zu suchen, statt ihnen die Schlüssel vor die Füße zu werfen.

Während einer Massenkundgebung in Gaza-Stadt als Anlass des dritten Todestages von Yasser Arafat werden von „Hamas“-Milizionären sieben Palästinenser getötet. Die Homepage der „Al-Qassam-Brigaden“ – dem bewaffneten Arm von „Hamas“ – behauptet, dass Demonstranten zunächst Steine auf Polizisten geworfen hätten. Präsident Machmud Abbas kündigt einen eintägigen Generalstreik an.

Nach dem neuen Bericht der Bewegung „Frieden jetzt“ hält die Bautätigkeit in 88 Siedlungen der Westbank weiter an, und zwar überwiegend westlich der „Sicherheitszäune“. Gegenüber dem Vorjahr sei die Zahl der Siedler um 5,8 Prozent auf 267.000 Personen gestiegen. Die „Jerusalem Post“ meldete am 31. Oktober, dass von der geplanten 790 Kilometer langen Route der „Sicherheitszäune“ bislang 450 Kilometer gebaut worden seien und

dass in den vergangenen vier Monaten kein einziger Kilometer dazugekommen sei.

10.11.2007:

108 prominente Palästinenser, unter ihnen Sari Nusseibeh, richten an Präsident Machmud Abbas einen Appell, bei der Konferenz in Annapolis „unsere nationalen Interessen nicht zu verletzen".

08.11.2007:

Der diplomatische Korrespondent von „Haaretz", Akiva Eldar, erhält in diesem Jahr den „Eliav-Sartawi Preis für Nahost-Journalismus" der von der in New York tätigen Gruppe „Search for Common Ground" verliehen wird. Arie Lova Eliav gehört zu den frühen Befürwortern einer israelisch-palästinensischen Annäherung, die er in seinem Buch „Land of the Hart. Israelis, Arabs, the territories and a vision of the future", Philadelphia 1974, begründete. Der Arzt und Europa-Koordinator der PLO Issam Sartawi setzte sich auf der palästinensischen Seite ebenso frühzeitig für einen Ausgleich mit Israel ein und wurde am 10. April 1983 am Rande der Tagung der „Sozialistischen Internationalen" in Lissabon ermordet. Das Verbrechen wurde der palästinensischen Terrorgruppe von Abu Nidal zugeschrieben.

07.11.2007:

Die Internetseite ynet.com von „Yediot Achronot" meldet, dass in den vergangenen Monaten rund 3000 Jerusalemer Palästinenser einen Antrag auf die israelische Staatsbürgerschaft gestellt hätten, während es in den Jahren seit dem Junikrieg 1967 insgesamt nur 12.000 gewesen seien. Der Bericht zitiert einen Palästinenser mit den Worten, dass er für sich und seine Frau, die in der Westbank gebürtig sei, diesen Schritt getan habe, weil er befürchte, dass seine Frau ansonsten gezwungen werde, Jerusalem zu verlassen. Die in

der Stadt lebenden 240.000 Palästinenser besitzen den Status permanenten Wohnrechts, der sie zur Teilnahme an den Stadtratswahlen berechtigt, die sie allerdings nur in wenigen Fällen nutzen.

05.11.2007:

In einem Interview mit der palästinensischen Nachrichtenagentur „Maan“ kündigt der Nahost-Beauftragte des Quartetts, Tony Blair, an, dass er „brutal realistisch“ an die ihm aufgetragenen Aufgaben gehen werde, den Palästinensern beim Aufbau von Institutionen einschließlich der Reform der Sicherheitsdienste und bei der Sicherung eines höheren Lebensstandards zu helfen.

04.11.2007:

Nach Gesprächen mit US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice in Jerusalem erklärt ihre israelische Amtskollegin Tsipi Livni, dass die „Road Map” des internationalen Quartetts verwirklicht werden müsse. Nach ihrer Interpretation müssen die Palästinenser zuerst die militanten Gruppen auflösen, bevor Israel einem palästinensischen Staat zustimmen werde.

03.11.2007:

Bei der Gedenkfeier aus Anlass des zwölften Jahrestages der Ermordung von Yitzhak Rabin nehmen in Tel Aviv mehr als hunderttausend Menschen teil. In seiner Ansprache beklagt der Schriftsteller David Grossman den moralischen Verfall von Staat und Gesellschaft, der in krassem Widerspruch zur militärischen Stärke stehe. Bei der Begegnung mit Ehud Olmert, an den er sich mehrfach anklagend wendet, weigert sich Grossman, dem Ministerpräsidenten die Hand zu reichen[17]. Rabins Sohn Yuval Rabin ruft die israelische Gesellschaft auf, sich von seinem Mörder Yigal Amir zu distanzieren

– dessen Sohn am selben Tag beschnitten wird – und die universellen Werte der Demokratie und Humanität zu achten.

02.11.2007:

Der palästinensische Präsident Machmud Abbas empfängt in Ramallah vier hochrangige Angehörige von „Hamas“, unter ihnen den früheren stellvertretenden Ministerpräsidenten Nasser Eddin al-Shaer zu Gesprächen. Das Treffen gilt dem Ziel, die Spannungen unter den Palästinensern zu mildern und für die Geschlossenheit der palästinensischen Delegation bei der Konferenz in Annapolis zu demonstrieren, die nach den bisherigen Zeitplänen am 26. November beginnen soll.

01.11.2007:

Die Europäische Union und Israel eröffnen in Tel Aviv einen „European-Israeli Business Dialogue“, der der Förderung von Unternehmeraktivitäten und wirtschaftlicher Erneuerung zugute kommen soll. Dazu unterzeichnen EU-Vizepräsident Günter Verheugen und Israels Handelsminister Eliyahu Ishai ein Memorandum.

Oktober 2007

28.10.2007:

Die israelische Regierung beschließt auf Betreiben von Verteidigungsminister Ehud Barak (Arbeitspartei) die Drosselung der Energiezufuhr in den Gazastreifen. Damit sollen die Palästinenser für den Raketenbeschuss in das südliche Israel bestraft werden. Von den Einschränkungen betroffen sind vor allem palästinensische Versorgungseinrichtungen wie Krankenhäuser, Kindergärten, Schulen, Tankstellen, Elektrizitätswerke sowie die privaten

Haushalte. Israelische und palästinensische Menschenrechtsorganisationen erreichen beim Obersten Gericht in Jerusalem die Nachprüfung der Entscheidung innerhalb von fünf Tagen. Bis dahin setzt Generalstaatsanwalt Menachem Mazuz den Vollzug des Beschlusses aus.

Israels Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert räumt vor einer Pressekonferenz in Jerusalem seine Prostata-Krebserkrankung im Frühstadium ein. Sie würde ihn nicht in seiner Amtsführung beeinträchtigen, beruhigt er sein Kabinett. Kommentatoren spekulieren, ob die für den 26. November in Annapolis (Maryland) geplante Konferenz verschoben werden muss.

09.10.2007:

Israelische Medien berichten über die bevorstehende Enteignung von 1.129 Dunam (113 Hektar; 1 Dunam = 1.000 qm) palästinensischen Landbesitzes für den Bau einer Straße zwischen Ost-Jerusalem und Jericho. Dazu sollen 3500 Wohneinheiten gehören. Die neue Straße soll die sogenannte E1-Route zwischen Jerusalem und Maale Adumim von palästinensischem Verkehrsaufkommen befreien. Kommentatoren fragen, ob damit der Vorbereitung einer gemeinsamen israelisch-palästinensischen Erklärung für die bevorstehende Konferenz am 26. November in Annapolis (US-Bundesstaat Maryland) ein Ende gesetzt werden soll. Vermutet wird hinter der Neuauflage der Enteignungspläne, die 2004 auf amerikanisches und europäisches Verlangen zurückgestellt wurden, Verteidigungsminister Ehud Barak (Arbeitspartei). US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice bringt gegenüber dem israelischen Botschafter in Washington, Sally Meridor, ihr Befremden zum Ausdruck und verlangt Aufklärung.

08.10.2007:

Das israelische und das palästinensische Verhandlungsteam treffen sich zum ersten Mal in Jerusalem, um eine Erklärung zur Vorlage auf der Regionalkonferenz am 26. November in Annapolis (US-Bundesstaat Maryland) vorzubereiten. Von palästinensischer Seite, die von dem ehemaligen „Oslo"-Unterhändler und späteren Ministerpräsidenten Achmed Qureia geleitet wird, gehören an Saeb Erakat, Yasser Abed Rabbo und Akram Haniyeh. Ihr sitzt das israelische Team unter Leitung von Außenministerin Tsipi Livni mit Olmerts Stabschef Yoram Turbowicz, Shalom Turgeman (Amt des Ministerpräsidenten), Aharon Abramovitch (Auswärtiges Amt) und Amos Gilad (Verteidigungsministerium) gegenüber.

07.10.2007:

In Gaza-Stadt ist der Leiter des einzigen christlichen Buchladens im Gazastreifen, der zur baptistischen Bibelgesellschaft gehörige Rami Khader Ayyad, von Islamisten ermordet worden.

03.10.2007:

In seiner Jerusalemer Residenz beginnen Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert und Präsident Machmud Abbas mit ihren Teams die offiziellen Verhandlungen zwischen beiden Seiten. Dabei werde Abbas, heißt es von palästinensischer Seite, die zentralen Konfliktthemen „Siedlungen", „Grenzen", „sichere Übergänge", Jerusalem" und „Flüchtlinge" einbringen. Während Abbas ein ausgearbeitetes Rahmenwerk anstrebt, besteht Olmert auf einer „Declaration of Interests". Die israelische Regierung wünscht keinen Zeitplan, um die genannten Probleme zu lösen. Yossi Beilin, Vorsitzender von „Meretz", betont, dass Verzögerungen den Extremisten in die Hände spielen. Die Verhandlungen sollen nach Angaben von Präsidentenberater Yasser Abed Rabbo geheim geführt werden.

Angehörige von „Hamas“ stürmen ein Gebäude von „Fatah“ in Gaza-Stadt, nachdem ein Tag zuvor vier Palästinenser getötet worden sind.

01.10.2007:
Die israelischen Behörden entlassen 57 palästinensische Häftlinge, die aus der Westbank stammen. Nach Presseberichten sollen insgesamt 11.000 Palästinenser in israelischen Anstalten sitzen.

September 2007

24.09.2007:
Die israelischen Autoren A.B. Yehoshua, David Grossman, Yehudit Katzir, Alice Shalvi, Yael Megged, Yehoshua Sobol, Amos Oz, Meir Shalev, Eli Amir, Zruya Shalev, Esther G. Haim und Savyon Liebrecht richten einen Appell an die Regierung in Jerusalem, in dem sie ein Abkommen mit Machmud Abbas und Verhandlungen über die Waffenruhe mit Hamas verlangen.

Israel lässt 87 palästinensische Gefangene frei.

21.09.2007:
Die Anzeichen mehren sich, dass in der israelischen Regierung über den künftigen Status des 1981 „wiedervereinigten“ Jerusalem nachgedacht wird. Nach Medienberichten kann der Vorstoß Haim Ramon („Kadima“), auf Teile der Stadt zugunsten der Palästinenser zu verzichten, bei Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert mit Zustimmung rechnen.

19.09.2007:

Das israelische Kabinett beschließt, den Gazastreifen zum „Feindgebiet" zu erklären, um „Hamas" zu schwächen und die militante Gruppe „Islamischer Djihad" zur Beendigung des Raketenbeschusses auf israelische Ortschaften zu zwingen. Nach US-amerikanischen Medienberichten ist Washington im Vorfeld nicht über die Entscheidung informiert worden. UN-Generalsekretär Ban Ki-Moon warnt vor einer kollektiven Bestrafung der palästinensischen Bevölkerung.

Oppositionsführer Benjamin Netanyahu bestätigt in einem Interview mit dem israelischen Fernsehen, dass er von vornherein in den Abwurf von Bomben auf eine syrische Militäranlage am 9. September eingeweiht gewesen sei. Die Aussage wird von Seiten der Regierung als Geheimnisbruch scharf kritisiert.

Auf ihrem Flug von Washington nach Israel verlangt US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice Fortschritte bei der Vorbereitung der für Mitte November geplanten Nahostkonferenz. Es gehe nicht an, ständig über die Zweistaatenlösung zu sprechen. Rice bezieht sich mit ihrer Kritik auf Ehud Olmerts Absicht, mit Machmud Abbas lediglich eine gemeinsame Absichtserklärung zu unterschreiben, während Abbas auf einer „Prinzipienerklärung" besteht.

In Beirut wird der libanesische Abgeordnete Antoine Ghanem von der Phalange-Partei durch die Explosion einer Autobombe ermordet. Mit ihm kommen zwei Leibwächter und zwei Passanten ums Leben. Ghanem ist der achte Politiker der antisyrischen Mehrheit im Parlament, der einem Anschlag zum Opfer fällt.

Nach Presseberichten ist im Juli eine mit Senfgas bestückte Scud-C-Rakete in einer syrischen Militäranlage explodiert, bei der 15 Personen getötet worden sein sollen.

12.09.2007:

Der Bundestag stimmt der Verlängerung des UNIFIL-Mandats in Libanon mit 441 gegen 126 Stimmen bei vier Enthaltungen zu. Nur die FDP und „Die Linke“ bleiben bei ihrem Nein.

10.09.2007:

Israels Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert und der palästinensische Präsident Machmud Abbas kommen in Olmerts Jerusalemer Resident zu einem zweistündigen Gespräch erneut zusammen. Sie benennen Verhandlungsteams zur Klärung von Einzelfragen ─ Kommunikation, Sicherheit, Wirtschaft – im Hinblick auf die internationale Friedenskonferenz im November.

06.09.2007:

Israelische Kampfflugzeuge bombardieren in der syrischen Wüste eine Militäranlage, in der nach US-amerikanischen Erkenntnissen Atomwaffen gebaut würden.

02.09.2007:

Der palästinensische Präsident Machmud Abbas schließt per Dekret die Teilnahme von „Hamas“ bei den nächsten Parlamentswahlen aus. Alle Kandidaten, heißt es, müssten die PLO als einzige legitime Repräsentantin des palästinensischen Volkes anerkennen. „Hamas“ gehört dieser Dachorganisation unterschiedlicher Gruppen und Parteien nicht an. Während Vertreter von „Hamas“ betont, dass nur das Parlament einen solchen Beschluss fassen dürfe, weist Abbas darauf hin, dass es seit langem nicht mehr funktionstüchtig sei.

Einheiten der libanesischen Armee besetzen den Rest des palästinensischen Flüchtlingslagers Nahr el-Bared in der Nähe von Tripoli, das seit Monaten von der Gruppe „Fatah al-Islam“ besetzt war. Ministerpräsident Fuad Siniora spricht von einem „großen nationalen Sieg“.

August 2007

28.08.2007:
Entwicklungsministerin Heidi Wieczorek-Zeul unterzeichnet in Damaskus ein Abkommen, wonach die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 34 Millionen Euro als Finanzhilfe und weitere zehn Millionen für die technische Zusammenarbeit bis 2009 zahlen will. Weitere vier Millionen Euro stellt die deutsche Ministerin für die Integration irakischer Flüchtlinge in Syrien in Aussicht. Gleichzeitig berichten Medien über die zunehmende Drangsalierung von syrischen Dissidenten.

Israel verringert seine Truppenpräsenz auf den Golanhöhen.

27.08.2007:
Seit seinem Amtsantritt im Juni trifft Israels Außenministerin Tsipi Livni in Jerusalem mit dem palästinensischen Ministerpräsident Salam Fayyad zum vierten Mal zusammen. Dabei geht es um die Stärkung der sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Verbindungen. Am selben Tag verhandeln drei Stunden lang Ehud Omert und Machmud Abbas in Olmerts Jerusalemer Residenz; es ist ihre dritte Begegnung. Nach Angaben von Abbas' Berater Saeb Erakat werden die entscheidenden Probleme „Grenzen", „Flüchtlinge" und „Jerusalem" nicht angesprochen. Dagegen berichtet der israelische Regierungssprecher David Baker von Verhandlungen über „grundlegende Probleme".

13.08.2007:
Bei den parteiinternen Wahlen um den Vorsatz im „Likud" setzt sich Benjamin Netanyahu mit 73,2 Prozent gegen seine Konkurrenten

Moshe Feiglin und Danny Danon durch. Die Wahlbeteiligung liegt bei vierzig Prozent.

06.08.2007:
Zum ersten Mal seit der Ära Barak-Arafat empfängt Präsident Machmud Abbas in Jericho Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert. Die Begegnung dauert mehr als drei Stunden. In seiner Begrüßungsansprache betont Olmert, dass er gekommen sei, um „ausstehende fundamentale Fragen“ mit Abbas zu diskutieren. „Es ist unser gemeinsames Ziel, eine miteinander getragene Vision für die Schaffung zweier Staaten für zwei Völker Seite an Seite in Frieden und Sicherheit zu schaffen“, und zwar „so schnell wie möglich“, erklärt Olmert. Berater sprechen von einem „Gerippe“ für einen künftigen Vertrag, das bei der internationalen Konferenz im November 2007 präsentiert werden soll. Dagegen betont Regierungssprecher David Baker, dass die Gespräche dazu dienen sollten, Vertrauen zu schaffen, auf das man aufbauen könne. Das nächste Treffen soll in zwei Wochen stattfinden.

Juli 2007

31.07.2007:
Nach einem Bericht von Danny Rubinstein in „Haaretz“ können in rund 20.000 Fällen palästinensische Eltern und Familien in Ost-Jerusalem nicht mit ihren Angehörigen in der Westbank zusammenleben, ohne dass sie ihr Wohnrecht in der Stadt verlieren.

26.07.2007:
Nach seinem Treffen mit dem „Meretz“-Vorsitzenden Yossi Beilin in Ramallah äußert Machmud Abbas die Hoffnung, innerhalb des Jahres 2008 werde es zu einem Friedensvertrag mit Israel kommen.

Diese Erwartung, so die Zeitung „Maariv“, hätten ihm George W. Bush und Condoleezza Rice bestätigt. Nach Zeitungsberichten soll Abbas bei dem Gespräch mit Beilin die neue politische Plattform erläutert haben, die erstmals auf das Mittel des bewaffneten Kampfes zur Errichtung des palästinensischen Staates verzichtet. Das Dokument wird am 27. Juli von Ministerpräsident Salam Fayyad der Öffentlichkeit vorgestellt[18].

Der Nationale Sicherheitsberater und Sekretär des Nationalen Sicherheitsrates, Mohammed Dachlan, tritt zurück.

In Jerusalem stellt der Milliardär Arkadi Gaydamak die von ihm gegründete „Bewegung für soziale Gerechtigkeit“ vor. Gegen Gaydamek liegt seit 2000 auf Veranlassung der französischen Justiz ein internationaler Haftbefehl wegen Steuerhinterziehung und die Verwicklung in illegalen Waffenhandel vor.

Zwei Tage nach der Freilassung von seit acht Jahren in libyschen Gefängnissen festgehaltenen bulgarischen Krankenschwestern und einen palästinensischen Arzt unterzeichnen Frankreichs Präsident Nicolas Sarkozy und der libysche Präsident Muammar Gaddafi in Tripoli ein geheimes „Memorandum über die Kooperation zur friedlichen Nutzung der Kernenergie“. Danach soll in der Nähe von Tripoli mit dem Bau eines Reaktors begonnen werden. Der Pariser Vorstoß löst unter den EU-Partnern kritische Kommentare aus.

25.07.2007:

Erstmals besuchen im Auftrag der Arabischen Liga der ägyptische Außenminister Achmad Abul Gheit und sein jordanischer Kollege Abdelelah al-Khatib Israel und werben in Gesprächen mit Staatspräsident Shimon Peres, Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert, Außenministerin Tsipi Livni und Oppositionsführer Benjamin Netanyahu für den Friedensplan der Arabischen Liga vom März 2002, der genau fünf Jahre später in Riyadh bestätigt wurde.

16.07.2007:

Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert und Präsident Machmud Abbas treffen im Jerusalemer Amtssitz von Olmert zu dem seit langem vereinbarten Gespräch zusammen. Grundlegende Ergebnisse sind nach dem zweistündigen Gespräch nicht erkennbar. Olmert sagt die beschleunigte Freilassung von 256 palästinensischen Häftlingen zu, außerdem soll für 178 gesuchte Angehörige der „Al-Aqza"-Brigaden und anderer palästinensischer Verbände eine Amnestie erlassen werden. Der palästinensische Minister für Gefangenen-Angelegenheiten Ashraf Eid al-Ajrami bedauert, dass es sich bei den Freizulassenden um nur Personen mit Kurzstrafen handele. Am 20. Juli lassen die israelischen Behörden 255 Palästinenser frei.

Die Knesset wählt Shimon Peres zum neunten Präsidenten des Staates Israel. An die Stelle von Peres als stellvertretender Ministerpräsident tritt der frühere Justizminister Haim Ramon.

US-Präsident George W. Bush wiederholt in Washington seine Vision einer Zweistaatenlösung in Grenzen, die „frühere Verläufe und gegenwärtige Realitäten" widerspiegeln, kündigt die Unterstützung von Präsident Machmud Abbas und Ministerpräsident Salam Fayyad an, begrüßt die Rolle von Tony Blair als neuem „Quartett"-Repräsentanten, dessen Aufgaben er mit dem Aufbau von Institutionen für den lebensfähigen und territorial zusammenhängenden palästinensischen Staat, der Entwicklung eines gesunden Finanzsystems und der Geltung des Gesetzes bezeichnet. Schließlich fordert Bush die internationale Gemeinschaft zu mehr Anstrengungen für den Frieden auf und kündigt ein regionales Friedenstreffen („international meeting") unter Leitung von Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice für den Herbst an. Die ursprünglich für den 25. Juni geplante Ansprache war wegen der innerpalästinensischen Auseinandersetzungen im Gazastreifen verschoben worden[19].

Mai 2007

31.05.2007:

Die frühere Beauftragte für Sonderaufgaben im Amt des Generalstaatsanwaltes, Talia Sasson, äußert in einem Beitrag für „Haaretz“ Bedenken gegen die Änderung des Eides bei der Einführung von Knesset-Abgeordneten. Während er bisher lautet „Ich schwöre, gegenüber dem Staat Israel loyal zu sein und in gutem Glauben meine Aufgaben in der Knesset zu erfüllen“, solle er wie folgt geändert werden: „Ich schwöre, gegenüber dem jüdischen und demokratischen Staat Israel loyal zu sein, gegenüber seinen Werten und Symbolen sowie in gutem Glauben meine Aufgaben in der Knesset zu erfüllen.“ Sollte die neue Formel angenommen werden, so Sasson, würden die arabischen Abgeordneten ausgeschlossen und die arabische Bevölkerung, die sie vertreten, weiter entfremdet werden. Damit würde Israel als demokratischem Staat und seiner internationalen Reputation zusätzlich geschadet werden[20].

Der diplomatische Korrespondent von „Haaretz“, Aluf Benn, berichtet von ernsthaften Bemühungen der israelischen Regierung, über eine dritte Partei Friedensverhandlungen mit Syrien anzubahnen. Benn zitiert dabei Äußerungen von Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert im kleinen Kreis[21].

Anlässlich der scharfen Sicherheitsmaßnahmen aus Anlass des G-8-Gipfels in Heiligendamm (Ostsee) zählt Burkhard Müller in der „Süddeutschen Zeitung“ die Plätze auf dem Globus, an denen Zäune und Mauern die Nachbarn voneinander trennen sollen: Israel und Palästina; Syrien und die Türkei; Irak und Iran; Iran und Pakistan; Pakistan und Afghanistan; Indien und Pakistan; Indien und Birma; Birma und Thailand; Nord- und Südkorea. Außerdem zögen die USA

im Innern Iraks Zäune und Mauern, um die verfeindeten Gruppen im Lande auseinanderzuhalten.

30.05.2007:

Das Nahost-Quartett veröffentlicht nach Beratungen in Berlin ein Kommuniqué, in dem es seine tiefe Besorgnis über die Gewalt im Gazastreifen ausdrückt und alle Palästinenser zum Gewaltverzicht und zur Waffenruhe auffordert. Gleichzeitig verurteilt das Quartett den „Qassam"-Beschuss auf den Süden Israels und die Aufrüstung von „Hamas" und anderen Terrorgruppen. Präsident Machmud Abbas wird aufgefordert, Ruhe und Ordnung wiederherzustellen. Das Quartett verlangt von Israel, bei seinen Gegenangriffen Zurückhaltung gegenüber der Zivilbevölkerung und der Infrastruktur zu üben, und bringt seine „besonderen Sorgen" über die Festnahme von palästinensischen Abgeordneten zum Ausdruck. Darüber hinaus begrüßt das Quartett den fortgesetzten Dialog zwischen Ehud Olmert und Abbas und unterstützt die US-amerikanischen Bemühungen, die Sicherheit, die Bewegungsfreiheit und die „Zugangsfragen" – gemeint sein dürften die Öffnung der Übergänge Karni und Rafach im Gazastreifen – zu fördern. Die Palästinenser sollten wissen, dass ihr Staat lebensfähig sein werde, und die Israelis sollten wissen, dass ein künftiger Staat Palästina eine „Quelle der Sicherheit und nicht der Bedrohung" sein werde. Abschließend heißt das Quartett die Bestätigung der arabischen Friedensinitiative am 28. März in Riyadh willkommen, die im Rahmen der „Road Map" ein lebenswichtiges Element bei den internationalen Bemühungen um einen regionalen Frieden darstelle. Die Mitglieder des Quartetts kündigen für Juni ein Treffen mit Israelis und Palästinensern an, wobei die erzielten Fortschritte überprüft und weitere Schritte diskutiert werden sollen[22].

Der palästinensische Informationsminister Mustafa Barghouti (unabhängig) verwahrt sich in einer Pressekonferenz in Ramallah scharf gegen den Vorschlag von „Meretz/Yachad", im Gazastreifen

eine internationale Truppe unter Aufsicht der Arabischen Liga zu stationieren. Diese Empfehlung verstoße gegen das Recht der Palästinenser, über ihr eigenes Schicksal zu entscheiden, und gegen das Prinzip der Staatsbildung.

Shimon Peres, einer der stellvertretenden Ministerpräsidenten, gibt seine Kandidatur für das Amt des israelischen Staatspräsidenten bekannt. Die Wahl findet in der Knesset am 12. Juni statt. Amtsinhaber Moshe Katzav lässt die Geschäfte ruhen, seitdem ihm die sexuelle Nötigung früherer Mitarbeiterinnen und die Annahme von Schmiergeldern vorgeworfen werden.

Die israelische Tageszeitung „Maariv (Abend)“ veröffentlicht die Ergebnisse einer Umfrage, wonach 86 Prozent der israelischen Bevölkerung nicht bereit sind, auf die „Klagemauer“ in der Jerusalemer Altstadt im Austausch für den Frieden zu verzichten. 53 Prozent sprechen sich gegen die Rückgabe großer Teile der Westbank an die Palästinenser aus, 46 Prozent sind dafür. 86 Prozent glauben nicht daran, dass die gegenwärtige Regierung den Friedensprozess mit Syrien einschließlich der Rückgabe der Golanhöhen unter der Voraussetzung eines Friedensvertrages fördern werde, acht Prozent sind davon überzeugt.

Die Vertreter des Verbandes der britischen Dozenten beschließen auf ihrer Jahrestagung im Badeort Bournemouth mit 158 gegen 99 Stimmen einen Antrag, ihren Mitgliedern in den kommenden zwölf Monaten den Boykott akademischer Einrichtungen in Israel zu empfehlen, die die Besatzung unterstützen. Darüber hinaus wird der Verband aufgefordert, über die Europäische Union ein Moratorium über Israel bei der Zusammenarbeit in Forschung und Kultur durchzusetzen und die Förderung seitens des Europäischen Wissenschaftsfonds einzustellen, bis sich Israel an UN-Resolutionen halte. Am 31. Mai berichten mehrere Medien, dass die britische Gewerkschaft des öffentlichen Dienstes (UNISON) für ihre Jahrestagung Mitte Juni in Brighton ebenfalls einen Boykottaufruf

vorbereite, auch wenn ein solcher Beschluss vorwiegend symbolischen Charakter haben werde. In einem Beitrag begründet Daniel Levy, der im israelischen Team der **„Genfer Initiative“** für den juristischen Feinschliff dieses Friedensvertragsentwurfs sorgte, seine Ablehnung des Boykotts: Ein Boykott solle entweder den Staat Israel delegitimieren oder er sei ein grundlegendes Missverständnis dessen, wie man im Nahen Osten Frieden erreichen, die Okkupation beenden sowie für Palästinenser und Israelis Sicherheit durchsetzen könne. Die Befürworter des Boykotts sollten wissen, schreibt Levy, dass ein Naher Osten ohne Israel auf ein Rezept hinauslaufe, das auf Generationen des Blutvergießens mit Unrecht bedeute und auf den Widerstand der großen Mehrheit der Juden in der Welt hinauslaufe. Deshalb würden viele palästinensischen Führer eine Zweistaatenregelung befürworten und die Förderung des Boykotts niedrig hängen. Die Beendigung der Okkupation und die Realisierung eines lebensfähigen und unabhängigen palästinensischen Staates würden einen Staat Israel als Partner brauchen. Wenn Israelis die Welt als unabänderlich feindlich gesinnt betrachteten, was durch den Boykott bestärkt werde, werde auch die künftige internationale Rolle bei der Beendigung des Konflikts weiter geschwächt. Es sei effektiver, die legitimen israelischen Sorgen und Wünsche zu verstehen und gleichzeitig keinen Zentimeter im Blick auf die Illegitimität und die kontraproduktive Natur der Okkupation abzuweichen[23].

Nathan Guttman berichtet in der US-amerikanisch-jüdischen Zeitung „Forward“ von Bemühungen, die großen jüdischen Friedensorganisationen in den USA „Peace Now“, „Israel Policy Forum“ und „Brit Tzedek v’Shalom“ im Herbst unter einem Dach zu integrieren. Dazu würden zehn Millionen US-Dollar benötigt. Liberale Beobachter erhoffen sich, so Guttman, von diesem Schritt ein Gegengewicht zum „American Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)“. Zu den Organisatoren gehöre auch Daniel Levy[24].

Der Sicherheitsrat der Vereinten Nationen beschließt einstimmig bei fünf Enthaltungen – darunter der Vetomächte China und Russland – die Einrichtung eines Sondertribunals zur Untersuchung des Mordes von Rafik Hariri. Der frühere libanesische Ministerpräsident war am 14. Februar 2005 in Beirut ermordet worden. Der Regierung in Beirut wird bis zum 10. Juni Zeit gelassen, der Aufforderung nachzukommen, ansonsten werde der Sicherheitsrat in eigener Verantwortung tätig werden. Aufgrund der Massenproteste nach dem Tod Hariris war die syrische Besatzungsmacht zwar gezwungen worden, ihre Truppen aus Libanon zurückzuziehen, ohne dass jedoch ihr indirekter Einfluss über ihre Geheimdienste und Parteigänger vollständig erlosch.

29.05.2007:

In der US-amerikanischen Zeitschrift „The American Prospect“ lässt der Autor des Buches „The Accidental Empire – Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967–1977“ (New York 2006), Gershom Gorenberg, die vergangenen vier Jahrzehnte seit dem Sechstagekrieg aus der Sicht der israelischen Siedlungspolitik Revue passieren und zitiert abschließend die Sorgen des früheren israelischen Botschafters in Berlin, Avi Primor, über den Imageverlust Israels in Europa: "The only problem we have in our international standing is the occupation and the settlements," says Avi Primor, head of the Center for European Studies at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya and a former Israeli ambassador to the European Union. He gives a striking example: After the Oslo Accords, the EU promised to give Israel "privileged status," under which it would receive all the benefits of membership except voting rights. It was an unprecedented offer, and would have had major economic benefits. The move was frozen following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, revived when Ehud Barak seemed poised to make peace, and frozen again after the failure at Camp David. In talks with the Europeans, explains Primor: "They say to you, 'What Israel are

we talking about, ... what are its borders, who are its residents, where are its human rights?'"

28.05.2007:

Im ersten Wahlgang der Arbeitspartei für die Neubesetzung des Vorsitzes setzt sich Ehud Barak mit 35,6 Prozent gegen Ami Ayalon durch, der 30,6 Prozent erhält. Der bisherige Amtsinhaber, Verteidigungsminister Amir Peretz, landet mit 22,4 Prozent auf dem dritten Platz. Auf Ophir Pines-Paz entfallen 8 Prozent vor Danny Yatom mit 2,7 Prozent. Von den 103.498 Mitgliedern nehmen 65,5 Prozent an den parteiinternen Wahlen teil. Da keiner der Kandidaten die notwendigen 40 Prozent der abgegebenen Stimmen erreicht, wird am 12. Juni eine Stichwahl zwischen Barak und Ayalon nötig.

Bei der Jahreskonferenz der israelischen Anwaltskammer in Eilat geraten Generalstaatsanwalt Menachem Mazouz und Justizminister Daniel Friedmann über die Frage aneinander, wer über die Wahl des Generalstaatsanwalts entscheidet. Friedmann plädiert für einen stärkeren Einfluss der Regierung, während Mazouz auf die Unabhängigkeit pocht. Der aus dem Amt scheidende Vorsitzende der Anwaltskammer, Shlomo Cohen, sieht in der Auseinandersetzung „einen Kulturkampf über den Charakter Israels als Rechtsstaat“. Der Hauptkommentar von „Haaretz“ verwahrt sich am 31. Mai gegen Versuche Friedmanns, die Unabhängigkeit der Rechtspflege auszuhöhlen – auch angesichts der Korruptionsvorwürfe gegen mehrere Regierungsmitglieder mit Ehud Omert an der Spitze[25].

27.05.2007:

In einem Referendum wird der syrische Präsident Bashar Assad für eine zweite Amtszeit bestätigt.

24.05.2007:

Die israelische Armee nimmt 33 hochrangige „Hamas“-Mitglieder in der Westbank fest, darunter den Erziehungsminister Nasser Eddin Sha’er, den ehemaligen Kabinettsminister Abdul Rachman Zeidan (Tulkarem), die Abgeordneten Hamed Bitawi und Daoud Abu Ser, den Leiter der „Waqf“-Einrichtung in Nablus, Fayad al-Aghbar, sowie die Bürgermeister Adli Yaish (Nablus), Wajich Qawas (Qalqilya), Omar Shtayyeh (Tal), Omar Abdul Jedayel (Samou), Omar Hamayel (al-Bireh) und Arab Shurafa (Beita) sowie weitere hohe Mitarbeiter von Ministerien und öffentlichen Einrichtungen. Am 24. Mai wird ein palästinensischer Bauer bei der Arbeit bei Einsätzen der israelischen Luftwaffe im Gazastreifen getötet. Nach Angaben des palästinensischen Informationsministers Mustafa Barghouti sind jetzt 41 der 131 Mitglieder des „Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC)“ ohne Anklage in Haft, so dass das Parlament funktionsuntüchtig sei. Am 26. Mai wird außerdem der Kabinettsminister Wafi Kabha festgenommen. Am 29. Mai nehmen israelische Soldaten in Nablus Jamal Abdel Hamid Mohammad Tirawi fest, dem vorgeworfen wird, zum militärischen Arm von „Fatah”, „Tanzim (Organisation)“, zu gehören, und Leiter der Sicherheitsdienste in der Stadt sein soll. Tirawi gehört als Abgeordneter dem palästinensischen Parlament an, dem „Palestinian Legislative Council“.

22.05.2007:

In einer Presseerklärung beklagt die italienische Abgeordnete und Vizepräsidentin des Europäischen Parlaments Luisa Morgantini („Konföderale Fraktion der Vereinigten Europäischen Linken/Nordische Grüne Linke“) den Ausbruch der Gewalt in Libanon, der erneut Tausende palästinensische Flüchtlinge der Kollektivbestrafung durch „Feinde des palästinensischen Volkes – „Fatah al-Islam“ – zum Opfer fallen würden, um direkt zum israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt überzugehen und die Politik Israels zu verurteilen[26].

21.05.2007:

Washington gibt der Regierung in Jerusalem Grünes Licht für Verhandlungen mit Syrien über die Golanhöhen, Sicherheitsmaßnahmen und einen Friedensvertrag. Gleichzeitig verweigert die US-Administration Israel das Recht auf Gespräche über Libanon und die US-amerikanische Politik in der Region.

Nach einem Bericht vom Vortag bezweifelt der Hauptkommentar von „Haaretz“ die Fortgeltung des Primats der Politik gegenüber dem Militär in der Westbank. Während die Regierung von der Zweistaatenlösung spreche, finde eine Art Militärputsch statt, der die Westbank in einen Siedlerstaat verwandle. Die Armee folge ihrer eigenen Agenda, gegenüber der das Verteidigungsministerium unter Leitung eines Zivilisten – gemeint ist Amir Peretz – nichts zu sagen habe. Folgerichtig habe ein Berater des Verteidigungsministers für die Westbank erklärt, dass die Armee an der diplomatischen Agenda der Regierung nicht interessiert sei und vor allem als die Armee der Siedler diene. Dazu gehörten die Ignorierung von Entscheidungen des Obersten Gerichts und die Unterlassung von Meldungen über die Zahl der „checkpoints“, so dass die Regierung über die Erleichterung des palästinensischen Lebens entspannt reden könne. Das Gerede von Ehud Olmert und Tsipi Livni über die Teilung des Landes klinge hohler denn je[27].

Uzi Benziman bezeichnet in einem Kommentar den Frieden mit Syrien als den Schlüssel zur Sicherung des Staates Israel. In der Zeitung „Haaretz“ schreibt Benziman, dass die militärische Abschreckungsfähigkeit Israels in den vergangenen sechs Jahren beschädigt worden sei und nicht mehr ausreiche. Auch wenn Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert seine politische Position damit weiter schwächen würde, liege es im nationalen Interesse Israels, für den Frieden mit Damaskus auf die Golanhöhen zu verzichten.

Im Alter von 67 Jahren stirbt der führende Soziologe an der Hebräischen Universität in Jerusalem Baruch Kimmerling. Kimmerling, der sich vor allem durch seine Studien zur extremen Rechten in Frankreich einen Namen machte, äußerte sich regelmäßig als Gastkommentator in Tageszeitungen. Zu seinen auch in deutscher Sprache vorliegenden Büchern gehörte „Politizid. Ariel Sharons Krieg gegen das palästinensische Volk“ (München 2003). Reuven Kaminer, „Urgestein“ der israelischen Friedensbewegung und Autor des Buches „The Politics of Protest: The Israeli Peace Movement and the Palestinian Intifada“ (Brigthon, U.K., 1996), rühmt in seinem Nachruf Kimmerlings Klarheit des Denkens, seine Fairness und seine politische Wahrhaftigkeit, die im scharfen Gegensatz zu den Anfeindungen gestanden habe, denen er ausgesetzt gewesen sei[28].

20.05.2007:

Bei den heftigsten Kämpfen seit dem Ende des libanesischen Bürgerkrieges im Jahr 1990 sterben seit dem 20. Mai in und um das palästinensische Flüchtlingslager Nahr al-Bared („Kalter Fluss“) nördlich der Hafenstadt Tripoli über achtzig Personen, darunter Soldaten, Islamisten und palästinensische Flüchtlinge. Die Gefechte brechen aus, nachdem Angehörige der Gruppe „Islamische Fatah“ am 18. Mai einen libanesischen Armeeposten beschossen und einen Tag später eine Bank überfallen wurde. Der libanesische Drusenführer und Vorsitzende der „Sozialistischen Fortschrittspartei (PSP)“ Walid Djumblat beschuldigt Syrien, Terroristen aus dem Ausland zu „importieren“. Die Rede ist von Saudis, Pakistanis und Bangladeschis mit Verbindungen zu „al-Qaida“. Am 22. Mai beschließt das Kabinett in Beirut, „Fatah al-Islam“ zu vernichten.

Der Sicherheitsberater von Jimmy Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski, hält im Interview mit der Zeitschrift „The American Prospect“ politische Regelungen im Nahen Osten für möglich, wenn die USA ihre Ambivalenz aufgeben und die Probleme angehen. Den israelisch-

palästinensischen Konflikt bezeichnet Brzezinski als lösungsreif, wenn Washington einen Abschluss verfolge, den beide Seiten nicht wollten. Kein Frieden sei möglich, wenn Israel die Kontrolle über den arabischen Teil Jerusalems aufrecht erhalte. Die **„Genfer Initiative“** habe die belangvollste Vorlage für eine Lösung vorgelegt. Europa werde nur dann eine politische Rolle spielen, wenn es mit den USA zusammenarbeite, dabei aber auf einer gemeinsamen Politik und einer gemeinsam getragenen Verantwortung bestehe. Der Krieg in Irak, der auch Regelungen im israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt beschädigt habe, habe den lebensfähigsten und modernsten arabischen Staat zerstört. Hinzu kämen die islamophobische Rhetorik von George W. Bush sowie die religiösen und rassistischen Tonlagen in den US-Medien, die ihn, Brzezinski, an die Diffamierung der Juden in Nazi-Deutschland erinnerten[29].

19.05.2007:

Der für den juristischen Feinschliff der **„Genfer Initiative“** auf israelischer Seite verantwortliche Daniel Levy, der gegenwärtig in Washington, D.C., arbeitet, beklagt im „Guardian“ die Untätigkeit der Europäischen Union, die das Engagement den beiden Nicht-EU-Ländern Schweiz und Norwegen überlasse. Da Europa vor der Haustür des Gazastreifens liege, wirkten die dortigen Ereignisse auf die moslemischen Gemeinschaften in Europa zurück. Schon deshalb sei die EU zum politischen Handeln aufgefordert[30].

18.05.2007:

Angesichts der israelischen Luftangriffe im Gazastreifen, nachdem mehr als 45 „Qassam“-Raketen auf die Stadt Sderot niedergingen, vereinbaren „Fatah“ und „Hamas“ das Ende ihrer gewaltsamen Auseinandersetzungen. Die Waffenruhe hält nicht. Israelische Kampfflugzeuge fliegen weiter Angriffe auf vermeintliche „Hamas“-Ziele, bei denen viele Zivilisten ums Leben kommen. Am 21. Mai stirbt eine 32jährige Frau in Sderot in ihrem Auto durch einen

Schrapnell-Beschuss aus dem Gazastreifen. Dort kündigt „Hamas“ als Antwort auf die „gezielte Tötung“ von Familienangehörigen des „Hamas“-Abgeordneten al-Haja, bei dem dieser nicht zu Schaden kommt, die Rückkehr zu Selbstmordattentaten in Israel an. Am 27. Mai stirbt ein weiterer Israeli in Sderot durch Schrapnell-Beschuss.

Der jordanische König Abdullah II. bezeichnet vor tausend geladenen Politikern und Geschäftsleuten beim „World Economic Forum“ in Petra am Toten Meer das Leiden der Palästinenser unter israelischer Besatzung als unerträglich. Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert fordert bei dieser Gelegenheit die Regierungen der Arabischen Liga zu Gesprächen „ohne Vorbedingungen“ auf. In gleicher Weise äußert sich Olmerts Stellvertreter Shimon Peres und kündigt einen Gegenplan zur Erklärung der Arabischen Liga vom März 2002 und Riyadh vom März 2007 an, ohne ihn näher zu erläutern. Daraufhin ruft ihm der palästinensische Chefunterhändler Saeb Erakat zu, dass die Verhandlungen vorüber seien und nun die Zeit für Entscheidungen gekommen sei.

17.05.2007:

Bradley Burston räumt in „Haaretz“ ein, dass die Redaktion des Blattes große Hoffnungen darauf gesetzt habe, in ihrer Internet-Ausgabe Lesern die Möglichkeit einzuräumen, auf Nachrichten und Beiträge spontan zu reagieren. Mittlerweile habe sich herausgestellt, dass diese Chance zu giftigen Bosheiten, rassistischen Beleidigungen, heftigen Wutanfällen und zur Aufforderung zur Gewalt missbraucht werde, die ernsthafte Leser abschreckten. Die Reaktionen stünden im krassen Widerspruch zu den humanistischen Werten wie Respekt, Würde des Menschen und Offenheit gegenüber anderen. In derselben Richtung wie Burston äußert sich am 21. Mai Gershon Baskin in der „Jerusalem Post“. Der Autor, neben Hanna Siniora Leiter des „Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI)“, vermutet hinter der aggressiven Resonanz auf seine zweiwöchentlichen Beiträge in dieser Zeitung

entweder die Opposition gegen jegliche Existenz des palästinensischen Volkes, die Leugnung eines zweiten Volkes oder die Verweigerung gleicher Rechte für die arabisch-palästinensische Minderheit in Israel selbst. Hinter jedem dieser Fälle verberge sich die abenteuerliche Idee eines „freiwilligen Transfer" der Palästinenser, wenn man ihnen das Leben nur unerträglich genug mache. Sollte sich die Zweistaatenlösung erledigen, wäre auch das Konzept Israels als demokratischer Staat beendet. „Nach vierzig Jahren Besatzung ist die Zeit für uns alle gekommen, befreit zu werden", schließt Baskin seinen Beitrag[31].

Der frühere US-amerikanische Botschafter in Ägypten und Israel, Dan Kurtzer, der heute an der „Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs" in Princeton lehrt, beklagt in einem Beitrag für die Website „bitterlemons", dass US-Präsident George W. Bush die Gelegenheit nach dem Tode von Yasser Arafat habe verstreichen lassen, sich energischer um den Endstatus im israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt zu bemühen. Stattdessen kümmere sich seine Regierung um nachgeordnete Probleme, statt die Chancen im Zuge der Erklärung der arabischen Gipfelkonferenz von Riyadh ernst zu nehmen. Nach den Präsidentschaftswahlen im November 2008 stünden die USA vor der Alternative, allein in die bilateralen Verhandlungen zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern zu gehen oder eine dritte Partei zu finden, die die Früchte der USA erntet[32].

16.05.2007:

Seit dem 11. Mai sind in Gaza Dutzende Palästinenser in Kämpfen zwischen „Fatah"- und „Hamas"-Anhängern getötet worden. Die Auseinandersetzungen halten an, so dass befürchtet wird, dass die innerpalästinensische Vereinbarung von Mekka vom 8. Februar keinen Bestand haben werde[33]. Der Generalsekretär von „Fatah", der in Tunis residierende Faruk Kaddumi, fordert „Hamas" auf, die Regierung der nationalen Einheit zu verlassen, und macht ihre

Führung für die Toten verantwortlich. Die syrische Regierung verlangt von beiden Seiten, sich an die Vereinbarung von Mekka zu halten. Ägyptens Präsident Hosni Mubarak distanziert sich von „Hamas“: Mit ihr werde es keinen israelisch-palästinensischen Frieden geben, wenn sie an der Macht bleibe.

15.05.2007:

Aus Anlass des „Nakba-Tages“ – der Erinnerung an die „Katastrophe“ der palästinensischen Flüchtlinge 1947/48 – veröffentlicht eine Gruppe von israelisch-arabischen Intellektuellen eine „Haifa-Deklaration“, in der sie Israel auffordert, ein Staat mit „nationaler Gleichberechtigung“ zwischen Juden und Arabern zu werden. Die Deklaration, die nicht von der islamischen Bewegung in Israel mitgetragen wird, ist die vierte ihrer Art in den vergangenen Monaten[34].

14.05.2007:

Der palästinensische Innenminister Hani Qawasmeh (unabhängig) tritt aufgrund der gewalttätigen Eskalation im Gazastreifen zurück, nachdem er am 23. April schon einmal diesen Schritt angekündigt, aber die Autonomiebehörde den Rücktritt ablehnte. Ministerpräsident Ismail Haniyeh übernimmt interimistisch das Innenressort.

Unter dem Eindruck der anhaltenden Gewalt im Gazastreifen kündigt die EU-Außenkommissarin Benita Ferrero-Waldner die mögliche Wiederaufnahme der direkten europäischen Finanzhilfen für die Palästinensische Autonomiebehörde an. Die Kolumnistin Amira Hass berichtet in „Haaretz“, dass sich nach Angaben des „UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)“ die auswärtigen Zuwendungen für die Palästinensische Autonomiebehörde im Jahr 2006 auf 900 Millionen US-Dollar gegenüber dem Vorjahr mit 349 Millionen US-Dollar erhöht hätten, und zwar mittels des „Temporary International Mechanism (TIM)“[35] oder über ein Konto bei Präsident

Machmud Abbas. Der größte Zuwendungsgeber sei mit 448 Millionen US-Dollar die Arabische Liga gewesen, gefolgt von der Europäischen Union mit 219 Millionen US-Dollar und 42 Millionen US-Dollar der Weltbank. Außerdem seien rund 180 Millionen US-Dollar bar in die palästinensischen Gebiete geschmuggelt worden.

Die „New York Times“ berichtet, dass das Internationale Komitee vom Roten Kreuz in einem vertraulichen Brief dagegen protestiert habe, dass Israel gegenüber Ost-Jerusalem und seinem Umland durch die Trennungsmauer, den Bau eines äußeren Siedlungsrings jenseits der Stadtgrenzen und der Schaffung eines dichten Straßennetzes, das die verschiedenen israelischen Ortsteile und Siedlungen innerhalb und außerhalb Jerusalems miteinander verbinde, eine allgemeine Nichtachtung seiner Verpflichtungen gemäß dem internationalen Menschenrecht an den Tag lege. Dadurch würden die Verbindungen der Palästinenser in Jerusalem und in der Westbank abgeschnitten und der Zugang aus der Westbank zu Schulen und Krankenhäusern in der Stadt erschwert. Der Sprecher des Auswärtigen Amtes Mark Regev weist die Behauptung zurück, dass Ost-Jerusalem besetztes Territorium sei. Nach der Annexion von 1967 wäre allen Palästinensern die Stadtbürgerschaft angeboten worden. Der Korrespondent der „New York Times“ in Jerusalem, Steven Erlanger, bestätigt, dass es für Palästinenser aus der Westbank fast unmöglich sei, nach Jerusalem zu gelangen, wenn sie nicht dort geboren seien. Selbst Besuche müssten beantragt werden. Das natürliche Wachstum und die Beschränkungen bei den Baut neuer Häuser bedeuteten, dass große Familien oft in sehr kleinen Wohnungen leben müssten.

Ebenfalls in der „New York Times“ berichtet Nicholas D. Kristof von einem vollständigen Friedensplan, den Iran im Mai 2003 als Geheimpapier den USA übermittelt habe, der jedoch von der Bush-Administration „getötet“ worden sei, obwohl er die US-amerikanischen Sorgen vor einer nuklearen Aufrüstung, vor dem Terrorismus und vor Irak angesprochen habe: „volle Offenlegung“

des iranischen Nuklearprogramms, „Ende jeder materiellen Unterstützung der palästinensischen Oppositionsgruppen“ und Druck auf „Hamas“, die Gewalt gegen israelische Zivilisten – nicht jedoch in den besetzten Gebieten – zu beenden, „aktive iranische Hilfe bei der Stabilisierung Iraks“, Unterstützung beim Übergang der „Hisbollah“ in eine politische Organisation sowie Übernahme der Erklärung der arabischen Gipfelkonferenz vom März 2002 zur Beendigung des israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikts. Im Gegenzug habe Teheran „gegenseitigen Respekt“, die Aufhebung des Boykotts, den Zugang zur Nukleartechnologie für friedliche Zwecke und eine US-amerikanische Erklärung verlangt, dass Iran nicht zur „Achse des Bösen“ gehöre[36].

Der am Londoner St. Anthony’s College lehrende israelische Historiker Avi Shlaim bezeichnet die Nahostpolitik des Ende Juni aus dem Amt scheidenden Premiers Tony Blair als „einen katastrophalen Fehlschlag“. Damit habe Blair mitgeholfen, die von Großbritannien beanspruchte Brückenfunktion zwischen Europa und den USA zu zerstören. Seine Unterstützung der neokonservativen Agenda im Irak sei unkritisch und bedingungslos gewesen. Dabei habe Blair nicht verstanden, dass die besonderen Beziehungen Washingtons nicht Großbritannien, sondern Israel gelten würden, so dass der Premier gegenüber den USA alle Konzessionen gemacht habe, ohne etwas dafür zu erhalten. Bush habe argumentiert, dass der Krieg in Irak die Palästinenser schwächen und sie zwingen würde, eine Regelung zu Israels Bedingungen zu akzeptieren, der Weg nach Jerusalem also über Bagdad verlaufe. Das wirkliche Problem sei jedoch Israels Besatzung und deren Unterstützung durch die USA. Darüber hinaus habe der Sturz des Baath-Regimes das Problem des Terrorismus nur verschärft[37].

13.05.2007:

Die geplante Begegnung zwischen dem jordanischen König Abdullah II. und dem palästinensischen Präsidenten Machmud Abbas in

Jericho wird angeblich wegen schlechten Wetters abgesagt, solle jedoch nachgeholt werden. Das Treffen wurde im Vorfeld des für diese Woche vorgesehenen Besuchs der ägyptischen und jordanischen Außenminister in Jerusalem vereinbart. Am 24. Mai meldet „Haaretz“, dass die Arabische Liga Jordanien damit beauftragt habe, im Namen der Arabischen Liga die Gespräche mit Israel zu führen. König Abdullah II. habe gegenüber Palästinensern betont, dass er keine Ambitionen in der Westbank verfolge und einen unabhängigen palästinensischen Staat wünsche.

Die israelische Außenministerin Tsipi Livni verteidigt in einem Interview mit der ägyptischen Zeitung „al-Ahram („Die Pyramiden)“ ihre Begegnung mit dem Präsidenten des italienischen Parlaments Fausto Bertinotti am 7. Mai in Jerusalem und wiederholt unter mehrfacher Betonung, dass sie als Repräsentantin der Mehrheit des israelischen Volkes für die Teilung des Landes zwischen dem Mittelmeer und dem Jordan in zwei Staaten eintrete und dass die Umsetzung dieses Ziels bislang am palästinensischen Terrorismus gescheitert sei. Dennoch werde der Rückzug aus dem Gazastreifen nicht der letzte Schritt sein[38].

Sprecher der israelischen Regierung verwahren sich gegen Vermutungen, dass Hubert Vedrine zum neuen französischen Außenminister in der Regierung von François Fillion ernannt wird. Vedrine sei für Israel einer der schlimmsten Außenminister gewesen und bleibe dies auch heute. Am 18. Mai wird der frühere Gesundheitsminister Bernard Kouchner, der zu den Mitbegründern der Hilfsorganisation „Ärzte ohne Grenzen“ in Frankreich gehörte, zum neuen Außenminister ernannt. Seine Sozialistische Partei droht daraufhin, Kouchner aus der Partei zu stoßen.

12.05.2007:

Die deutsche EU-Präsidentschaft teilt dem israelischen Außenministerium mit, dass die europäischen Botschafter nicht an

den Feierlichkeiten zum vierzigsten Jahrestag der „Vereinigung Jerusalems“ – dem „Jerusalem-Tag“ – in der Knesset am 13. Mai teilnehmen werden. Wie die arabischen Parteien weigert sich auch der Vorsitzende von „Meretz/Yachad“, Yossi Beilin, an der Zeremonie in der Knesset teilzunehmen: „Ich möchte mich nicht selbst belügen und an dieser merkwürdigen Veranstaltung teilnehmen, die die Vereinigung von Jerusalem ehrt, die nie stattgefunden hat.“ Auch der US-amerikanische Botschafter will nicht kommen. Hintergrund der Weigerungen sind die US-Teilungsresolution 181 von 1947, die für Jerusalem den Status eines „corpus separatum“ vorsah und die Annexion des arabischen Teils der Stadt durch Israel nach 1967. Der bis dahin unbekannte Abgeordnete Yoel Hasson („Kadima“) verwahrt sich am 13. Mai in einem Offenen Brief an den deutschen Botschafter Harald Kindermann gegen die „Respektlosigkeit“ der Absage und verbindet seinen Protest mit der Shoah: „Die Europäische Union und die deutsche Regierung könnten,“ so schreibt er, „eine historische Gelegenheit wahrnehmen, Fehler der Vergangenheit zu korrigieren[39].“ Der Hauptkommentar von „Haaretz“ erinnert am 16. Mai daran, dass ein Drittel der Gesamtbevölkerung Jerusalems – die Palästinenser – Bürger zweier Klasse seien oder – schlimmer noch – in israelischen Augen ein „demographisches Problem“ darstellten. Ministerpräsident Ehud Barak sei der erste gewesen, der eine Teilung der Stadt gemäß den „Clinton-Parametern“ vom Dezember 2000 vorgeschlagen habe, gefolgt von der **„Genfer Initiative“** und der Arabischen Friedensinitiative vom März 2002[40]. Nach einer Umfrage lehnen 96 Prozent der Israelis den Verzicht auf die westliche Umgehungsmauer des ehemaligen Tempelbezirks („Klagemauer“) selbst im Zuge eines dauerhaften Friedens ab. Dagegen würden 43 Prozent auf das arabische Ost-Jerusalem verzichten – derselbe Prozentsatz, der sich dagegen ausspreche. 84 Prozent glauben nicht an einen Frieden mit den Palästinensern[41].

10.05.2007:

Die „Jerusalem Post“ und „Haaretz“ berichten von einem Positionspapier des Auswärtigen Amtes in Jerusalem, in dem die Friedensabsichten des syrischen Präsidenten Bashar Assad als ernsthaft bezeichnet werden, wenn sich Israel nicht länger gegen Verhandlungen sperre. Gleichzeitig meldet die „Jerusalem Post“, dass der Kommandeur der „UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)“ entlang der israelisch-syrischen Grenze auf dem Golanhöhen, der österreichische Generalmajor Wolfgang Jilke, israelische Behauptungen zurückgewiesen habe, dass Syrien auf dem Höhenzug militärisch aufrüste; auf der israelischen Seite seien die Aktivitäten des Militärs größer. Am 7. Mai habe der Vorsitzende des israelischen „Nationalen Sicherheitsrates“ Ilan Mizrachi, vor dem Auswärtigen und Sicherheitsausschuss der Knesset erklärt, dass der syrische Ruf nach Friedensgesprächen authentisch sei. Aus dem Verteidigungsministerium verlaute, so „Haaretz“, dass die Einmischung von „Bürokraten“ – gemeint seien die Angehörigen des Auswärtigen Amtes – in das Geschehen auf den Golanhöhen unerwünscht sei. Dabei verweisen sie darauf, dass syrische Alleingänge von den anderen arabischen Staaten als ein Vorgehen bezeichnet würden, ihnen angesichts der gemeinsamen Erklärung von Riyadh Ende März 2007 in den Rücken zu fallen, und die Tür zu einer israelisch-palästinensischen Entspannung zugeschlagen würde.

09.05.2007:

Nach einem Bericht der Weltbank dient der Einsatz des israelischen Militärs in der Westbank weniger der Sicherheit Israels, sondern der Bewegungsfreiheit der Siedler und dem Ausbau der Siedlungen. Obwohl die israelische Regierung im November 2005 die Lockerung der Bewegungsfreiheit zugesagt habe, sei die Zahl der Straßensperren („checkpoints“) seither um 44 Prozent auf 546 gestiegen. Dadurch würde den Palästinensern der Zugang zu fast 50 Prozent der Westbank verwehrt: rund um die Siedlungen, das Jordantal, Ost-Jerusalem, die eingeschränkt nutzbaren Straßen auf

einer Länge von 700 Kilometern und die für militärische Zwecke geschlossenen Gebiete. Heute würden in 121 Siedlungen 250.000 Israelis leben, doppelt so viele wie 1994[42]. Der stellvertretende Verteidigungsminister Ephraim Sneh (Arbeitspartei) nennt den Bericht fehlerhaft und unausgewogen, weil er sich auf Dateien des von Ost-Jerusalem aus arbeitenden „UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)“ stütze. Laut Sneh gibt es 300 fliegende und 25 feste „checkpoints“. Nicht Israel erschwere das Leben der Palästinenser, sondern der Terror. Aus dem Bericht der Weltbank geht hervor, dass die Finanztransfer der internationalen Gemeinschaft nur sehr bedingt die Lebensverhältnisse der Palästinenser erleichtern.

07.05.2007:

Entgegen dem Boykott des Nahost-Quartetts und der israelischen Politik empfängt Außenministerin Tsipi Livni den Präsidenten des italienischen Parlaments, Fausto Bertinotti, der zuvor mit Angehörigen der „Hamas“ in Ramallah zusammengetroffen war.

06.05.2007:

Yoav Stern berichtet in „Haaretz” von libanesischen Pressestimmen, die nach dem israelischen Vorbild der Winograd-Kommission eine Untersuchung zur Verantwortung der „Hisbollah“ und der Regierung in Beirut für den Krieg im Sommer 2006 fordern.

04.05.2007:

„Haaretz” berichtet exklusiv über Termine, die die US-Regierung Israel und der Palästinensischen Autonomiebehörde zur Erfüllung vorgegeben habe. Danach solle Israel bis zum 1. Juli eine Busverbindung zwischen dem Gazastreifen und der Westbank einrichten, viele „checkpoints“ in der Westbank auflösen sowie den Zugang zu palästinensischen Dörfern öffnen, die durch den

„Sicherheitszaun“ nunmehr auf der israelischen Seite liegen. Im Gegenzug solle die Autonomiebehörde den Beschuss mit „Qassam“-Raketen aus dem Gazastreifen und den Waffenschmuggel über die ägyptische Grenze unterbinden sowie dafür sorgen, dass die Sicherheitskräfte Machmud Abbas unterstellt würden. Die israelische Regierung weist die Fixpunkte („benchmarks“) zurück. Vertreter der Palästinensischen Autonomiebehörde äußern sich dagegen zurückhaltend positiv. Am 8. Mai sagt US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice ihren geplanten Besuch in Jerusalem ab. Zur Begründung heißt es, dass sie darüber verärgert sei, dass die israelische Regierung die Washingtoner Fixpunkte an die Presse weitergegeben, bevor sie selbst eine Stellungnahme abgegeben habe. Außerdem halte sie, Rice, einen Besuch in Israel angesichts der dortigen Debatten um die Konsequenzen des Winograd-Berichts für sinnlos, weil sie nicht mit leeren Händen wieder abreisen wolle.

03.05.2007:

In Tel Aviv findet eine breit getragene Demonstration mit mehr als 100.000 Teilnehmern statt, die den Rücktritt von Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert fordern. Hauptredner ist der auch in Deutschland bekannte Schriftsteller Meir Shalev[43]. Unter den Teilnehmern befinden sich von Seiten der Arbeitspartei der ehemalige Minister Ophir Pines-Paz, der frühere Rektor der Universität Beersheva Avishai Braverman sowie die Abgeordneten Ami Ayalon und Danny Yatom, während die Abwesenheit von Ehud Barak – der sich um den Vorsitz der Partei ebenso bemüht wie Ayalon – auffällt. Führende Vertreter der Siedlerbewegung und des oppositionellen „Likud“ sind ebenfalls anwesend, nicht jedoch der Vorsitzende Benjamin Netanyahu. Von „Meretz/Yachad“ nimmt Yossi Beilin teil. Uri Avnery führt den „Gush Shalom“ an. Der Kolumnist Gideon Levy beklagt in einem „Haaretz“-Kommentar, dass sich die Organisatoren der Demonstration nur auf den kleinsten gemeinsamen Nenner „Olmert, geh nach Hause“ verständigt hätten, und fragt, wo denn – abgesehen von den Mutigen der radikalen Linken – die

Demonstranten gegen den Krieg im Sommer 2006 gewesen seien. Kein Redner habe die Frage gestellt, wie der nächste Krieg verhindert, die Besatzung beendet und Verhandlungen mit Syrien aufgenommen werden könnten.

Die international hochgeschätzte israelische Politologin Naomi Chazan bemerkt jenseits der öffentlichen Aufmerksamkeit bemerkenswerte und vielversprechende Entwicklungen in den israelisch-palästinensischen Beziehungen. Trotz aller Widerstände und Hindernisse gelinge es der **„Genfer Initiative“**, dem „Peres Center for Peace“, dem „Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI)“, der Gruppe „Gush Shalom um Uri Avnery, dem „Jerusalem Link“ und vielen anderen, über nationale Meinungsverschiedenheiten hinweg dem Extremismus die Stirn zu bieten und auf einen Kurs der Koexistenz hinzuarbeiten. Auch wenn diese Institutionen und Gruppen keine politische Führung ersetzen könnten, würden sie Marksteine für die rationale Interaktion und die Schaffung eines Klimas einer krönenden Versöhnung bilden[44].

Im ägyptischen Sharm el-Sheikh beginnt eine zweitägige internationale Irak-Konferenz, an der Delegierte aus sechzig Ländern und mehr als dreißig Außenminister teilnehmen. Am Rande der Konferenz trifft US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice den syrischen Außenminister Walid Mualem zu einem halbstündigen Gespräch und wechselt einige Worte mit dem iranischen Außenminister Manouchehr Mottaki. Damit durchbricht Rice den bisherigen Boykott Washingtons gegenüber diesen Ländern aus der „Achse des Bösen“.

02.05.2007:

Die beiden Architekten der **„Genfer Initiative“** Yossi Beilin und Yasser Abed Rabbo führen in Ramallah Gespräche mit dem palästinensischen Präsidenten Machmud Abbas. Abed Rabbo gehört zu Abbas’ engsten Beratern.

April 2007

30.04.2007:

Die von der Regierung eingesetzte fünfköpfige Untersuchungskommission unter Vorsitz des ehemaligen Richters am Obersten Gericht von Eliyahu Winograd übergibt die Ergebnisse ihrer Nachforschungen zum Krieg in Libanon 2006 unter dem Titel „Kommission zur Untersuchung des Ereignisfeldzugs im Libanon 2006“ und legt in einer ausführlichen Presseerklärung eine Zusammenfassung des öffentlich zugänglichen Teils vor; der volle Bericht soll imAugust vorgelegt werden. Dabei spart die Kommission nicht mit deutlicher Kritik an der politischen und militärischen Führung und wirft der Regierung Fehler vor, die ihre Schwäche im strategischen Denkens widerspiegele, das besonders Ehud Olmert vorzuwerfen sei: Er habe hastig entschieden, obwohl ihm kein detaillierter militärischer Plan vorgelegen habe. Verteidigungsminister Amir Peretz habe nicht im Rahmen des strategischen Konzepts gehandelt, für das er verantwortlich sei. Der scheidende Generalstabschef Dan Halutz seinerseits habe die politische Führung nicht mit der „Komplexität der Lage“ vertraut gemacht[45]. Der neue Generalstabschef Gabi Ashkenasi richtet ein Komitee zum Studium des Berichts ein. Führende Funktionäre von Olmerts „Kadima“-Partei äußern die Vermutung, dass der Ministerpräsident dem von dem Bericht ausgehenden Druck nicht standhalten und zurücktreten werde, und lehnen Neuwahlen ab, die die Partei voraussichtlich nicht überleben würde. Der zur Arbeitspartei gehörende Minister ohne Geschäftsbereich Eitan Cabel tritt am 1. Mai von seinem Amt zurück, um den Druck auf Olmert zu erhöhen. Der frühere Minister für Wissenschaft und Technologie Ophir Pines-Paz, der im November 2006 aus Protest gegen die Aufnahme von Avigdor Lieberman („Unser Haus Israel“) ins Kabinett zurücktrat, ruft zu Demonstrationen auf, damit seine Arbeitspartei die

Regierung verlässt. Nach ihrem Gespräch mit Olmert am 2. Mai fordert Außenministerin Tsipi Livni ihn zum Rücktritt auf und kündigt ihre Kandidatur als Vorsitzende von „Kadima“ an. Neuwahlen lehnt Livni ab. Während die Abstimmung in der Knesset-Fraktion mehrheitlich für Olmert ausgeht, kündigt der Koalitionsvorsitzende Avigdor Itzchaki aus Protest gegen Olmert seinen Rücktritt an. Das Kabinett beschließt die Einsetzung einer Arbeitsgruppe unter Vorsitz des früheren Generalstabschefs Amnon Lipkin-Shachak, die die Umsetzung der Empfehlungen der Winograd-Kommission prüfen soll. In einer Stellungnahme spricht sich der Vorsitzende von „Meretz/Yachad“, Yossi Beilin, am 3. Mai für den Amtsverzicht Olmerts aus und betont, dass Livni oder Shimon Peres, gegenwärtig einer der Stellvertretenden Ministerpräsidenten, die Aufgabe übernehmen könnte, ohne dass er – Beilin – beiden einen Blankoscheck für die künftige politische Unterstützung ausstellen wolle[46].

28.04.2007:

Der Leiter des in Damaskus residierenden Politischen Büros von „Hamas“, Khaled Meshal, erklärt in einem Interview mit der palästinensischen Zeitung „al-Ayyam („Die Tage)“ von Kairo aus, dass die überwältigende Mehrheit der palästinensischen Fraktionen für die Etablierung des Staates Palästina in den Grenzen von 1967 sei. Alle weiteren Überlegungen hingen von der politischen Entwicklung ab.

26.04.2007:

Nach einem Bericht der in Ost-Jerusalem erscheinenden „Middle East Times“ bedankt sich Präsident Machmud Abbas bei seinem Besuch in der Schweiz bei Außenministerin Micheline Calmy-Rey für die Unterstützung bei der Erstellung der **„Genfer Initiative“** und erklärt, dass er dafür sorgen werde, dass dieses grundlegende Dokument in der Arabischen Liga diskutiert werde[47].

Unter Bedingungen der Geheimhaltung beginnt in Amman vor einem Militärgericht ein Prozess gegen mehr als dreißig Angehörige der jordanischen Moslembruderschaft. Ihnen sollen Geldwäsche und terroristische Aktivitäten vorgeworfen werden.

24.04.2007:

„Hamas“ teilt mit, dass sie die seit November 2006 angeblich eingehaltene Waffenruhe brechen will – seither sollen über zweihundert „Qassam“-Raketen aus dem Gazastreifen im Süden Israels eingeschlagen sein. Als Begründung verweist „Hamas“ auf Angriffe des israelischen Militärs auf ihre Führungskräfte in der Westbank, bei denen am vergangenen Wochenende neun Palästinenser getötet worden seien.

Eine dreijährige Umfrage der „School for Political Science“ an der Universität Haifa unter 490 männlichen und weiblichen Soldaten hat ergeben, dass sie entgegen der Vorannahme am Ende ihres Militärdiensts abgestuft eher zu Kompromissen in Sicherheitsangelegenheiten neigen, eine höhere Achtung gegenüber der arabischen Minderheit in Israel und gegenüber den Menschenrechten an den Tag legen als zu Beginn ihres Wehrdienstes. Dis gelte insbesondere für die Feldsoldaten und Offiziere. Ziel der Untersuchung ist es nach Auskunft des Instituts gewesen festzustellen, ob das Militär politisch neutral sei, wie es behaupte, oder ob es politische Botschaften ausstrahlt. Das Institut schlägt vor, verstärkt Angehörige der nationalen Minderheiten (Araber, Drusen und Beduinen) sowie ultraorthodoxe Juden, religiöse Frauen und sozial auffällige Jugendliche in den Militärdienst aufzunehmen[48].

23.04.2007:

Der palästinensische Innenminister Hani Qawasmeh (Unabhängig) reicht bei Ministerpräsident Ismail Haniyeh seinen Rücktritt ein, weil er seine Autorität gegenüber den ihm unterstellten Sicherheitsbehörden nicht durchsetzen könne. Das Kabinett lehnt den Rücktritt ab.

Amir Oren enthüllt in „Haaretz“, dass das dem Pentagon nahestehende „Institute for Defense Analyses“ im Februar 1967 einen geheimen Notfallplan vorbereitet habe, wonach die USA militärisch Israel angreifen würden, sollte es in einem Krieg die Existenz, die Unabhängigkeit und die territoriale Integrität der arabischen Staaten jenseits der Waffenstillstandsgrenzen von 1949 bedrohen. Die Drohung richtete sich auch an Ägypten und Jordanien für den Fall eines von ihnen inszenierten Krieges gegen Israel. Die USA wollten einen vernichtenden Sieg beider Seiten und ein Eingreifen der Sowjetunion verhindern und selbst neutral bleiben. Dass der Plan nicht zur Ausführung kam, führt Oren darauf zurück, dass die militärischen Vorbereitungen hinter den diplomatischen Entwicklungen und den Erfolgen der Luftwaffe und der Panzereinheiten Israels im Sinai zurückblieben[49].

22./23.04.2007:

In Syrien finden Parlamentswahlen statt. Dabei fallen 167 der 250 Sitze automatisch der „Nationalistischen Fortschrittsfront (NPF)“ – einer Koalition der „Baath“-Partei mit neun kleineren Parteien – zu, so dass nur über 83 Sitze entschieden wird. Um sie bemühen sich Unabhängige, die seit 1990 an den Wahlen teilnehmen dürfen. Gemäß dem Wahlgesetz müssen 50 Prozent der Parlamentsmitglieder Arbeiter und Bauern sein. Die Wahlbeteiligung wird von Beobachtern im vorhinein auf drei bis vier Prozent geschätzt, weil politische Entscheidungen nicht im Parlament fallen. Die Geschäftsordnung gibt jedem Abgeordneten die Möglichkeit, in einer Legislaturperiode bis zu zehn Gesetzentwürfe einzubringen, wovon kaum jemand Gebrauch macht.

22.04.2007:
Aufgrund von Korruptionsvorwürfen während seiner Zeit als Vorsitzender der Gewerkschaft „Histadrut“ lässt der israelische Finanzminister Avraham Hirchson („Kadima“) sein Amt ruhen. Interimistisch übernimmt Ehud Olmert zusätzlich die Aufgaben.

21.04.2007:
In einem Gastkommentar in „Haaretz“ bezeichnet der ehemalige israelische Außenminister Shlomo Ben-Ami Annahmen als unrealistisch, die Regierung in Jerusalem könne durch ein Endstatus-Abkommen mit Präsident Machmud Abbas Verhandlungen mit der neuen palästinensischen Regierung unter Einschluss von „Hamas“ aus dem Wege gehen. Der Übergang von „Hamas“ zu einer parlamentarischen Politik sei historisch unvermeidlich, fährt Ben-Ami fort. Dabei werde sich jedoch die Bewegung nicht mit Kabinettsposten zufrieden geben, sondern die PLO von innen her aufzurollen versuchen. Die Beispiele der ägyptischen Moslembruderschaft, der „Islamischen Aktionsfront“ in Jordanien, der „Auferstehungspartei“ in Tunesien und der „Partei für Recht und Entwicklung“ in Marokko würden für den historischen Kompromiss den Weg anzeigen. Die USA würden den Krieg um die arabische Demokratie zwar gewinnen, aber paradoxerweise um seine Früchte gebracht werden, weil sie sich keinen islamischen politischen Pluralismus vorstellen könnten und einem westlichen liberalen Demokratiemodell anhingen[50].

In einem galligen Kommentar greift Uri Avnery Repräsentanten der extremen Linken in Israel an, die ihre politischen Theorien um jeden Preis der Realität anpassen wollten, um einen Vergleich mit dem Apartheidregime in Südafrika zu ziehen und damit einen allgemeinen Boykott Israels zu begründen. Nachdem die internationale Gemeinschaft die Palästinenser mit ihrem Finanzboykott nicht in die

Knie gezwungen habe, werde das bei dem wirtschaftlich viel stärkeren Israel noch weniger gelingen, zumal da solche Aufrufe bei den Überlebenden der Shoah Assoziationen der Naziparolen „Kauft nicht bei Juden“ wecke, die der Deportation in die Gaskammern vorausgingen. Mit seinen kritischen Äußerungen bezieht sich Avnery besonders auf den „neuen Historiker“ Ilan Pappe (Haifa), der bei einer Demonstration in einem palästinensischen Dorf nicht die Okkupation, sondern den politischen Zionismus als Grund allen Übels bezeichnet habe. Selbst wenn Avnery manchen Grundannahmen Pappes zustimmt, will er auch nach Jahrzehnten des politischen Kampfes an der Überzeugung festhalten, „die politische Richtung in Israel zu ändern“[51]. Pappe wechselt im Sommer 2007 auf den Lehrstuhl für Nahost-Geschichte an die Universität Exeter (U.K.).

20.04.2007:

Shahar Ilan gibt in „Haaretz“ Zitate wieder, die der jordanische König Abdullah II. gegenüber einer Delegation der Knesset bei deren Besuch am 18. April in Amman gemacht habe. Dabei solle der König gesagt haben, dass die arabischen Staaten und Israel im selben Boot gegen „Hisbollah“ und „Hamas“ sitzen würden und dass der arabische Friedensplan von Riyadh vom 28. März ein historisch einmaliges Verhandlungsangebot sei. Einen Tag später, am 21.April, weist der Direktor des Königlichen Kommunikations- und Informationsdienstes die Darstellung Ilans zurück. Die dem König zugeschriebenen Äußerungen seien verzerrt wiedergegeben worden. Die israelische Delegation unter Leitung des Vorsitzenden des Außen- und Sicherheitsausschusses der Knesset, Tsachi Hanegbi, bezeichnet die arabischen Erwartungen, den palästinensischen Flüchtlingen das Recht auf Rückkehr einzuräumen, als einen zu hohen Preis.

Der viel beachtete Kommentator David Ignatius berichtet in der „Washington Post“, dass Henry Kissinger US-Außenministerin

Condoleezza Rice geraten habe, trotz der Gewalt im Irak einen Dialog in Gang zu setzen, der in einen regionalen Prozess unter ägyptischer Führung münden und in einer dritten Phase eine Gruppe interessierter Staaten – zu denen Ignatius Indien, Indonesien und Pakistan rechnet – bitten solle, bei der Stabilisierung Iraks mitzuhelfen, wenn die US-Truppen schrittweise abgezogen werden. Gegenüber dem israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt solle Rice diplomatisch stärker Flagge zeigen, wozu entgegen israelischen Widerständen Treffen mit palästinensischen Kabinettsmitgliedern gehören sollten. Schon am 17. April begegnet Rice dem palästinensischen Finanzminister Salam Fayyad (Unabhängiger) im Büro ihres Stellvertreters C. Robert Welch.

18.04.2007:

In Tel Aviv treffen der israelische Verteidigungsminister Amir Peretz („Arbeitspartei“) und sein US-amerikanischer Kollege Robert Gates zusammen. Dabei lobt Gates die internationale Front gegen das iranische Nuklearprogramm und zeigt sich erfreut, dass die diplomatischen Bemühungen zu seiner Verhinderung, wenn auch nicht sofort, funktionieren.

17.04.2007:

Gemäß der Erklärung der Arabischen Liga vom 28. März in Riyadh beschließen dreizehn Außenminister die Einrichtung von Arbeitsgruppen für die anvisierten Verhandlungen mit Israel. Am selben Tag betont der Vorsitzende von „Meretz/Yachad“, Yossi Beilin, in der Internet-Ausgabe von „Yediot Achronot“, dass die arabische Initiative Prinzipien formuliert habe und keinen Ersatz für Verhandlungen darstelle. Wenn die arabischen Staaten, fügt Beilin hinzu, in die Schuhe der Palästinenser schlüpfen und für sie die Verhandlungen führen würden, wären ihre Positionen weit weniger kompromissbereit[52].

15.04.2007:

Im Rahmen des vereinbarten zweiwöchentlichen Turnus trifft Israels Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert In Begleitung von Außenministerin Tsipi Livni und Verteidigungsminister Amir Peretz den palästinensischen Präsidenten Machmud Abbas, in dessen Begleitung sich sein Chefunterhändler Saeb Erakat befindet. Statt über die Kernfragen eines Endstatus zu beraten, wie von palästinensischer Seite gefordert, stehen lediglich Fragen der Lebensverbesserung der palästinensischen Bevölkerung im Mittelpunkt.

12.04.2007:

Der syrisch-amerikanische Geschäftsmann Ibrahim Suleiman, der über enge Verbindungen zur Regierung in Damaskus verfügt, berichtet gemeinsam mit dem früheren Generaldirektor im Jerusalemer Außenministerium Alon Liel dem Auswärtigen und Sicherheitsausschuss der Knesset über ihren gemeinsamen Entwurf für einen Friedensvertrag zwischen beiden Staaten[53]. Bereits im Vorfeld des Auftritts weist ein Sprecher des Außenministeriums in Jerusalem die Bedeutung der Übereinkunft als irrelevant zurück und lehnt ein Treffen ab. Liel informiert den Ausschuss über seine Berichte an das Büro des damaligen Ministerpräsidenten Ariel Sharon und an das Außenministerium über den Fortgang der Gespräche mit Suleiman. Dieser unterstreicht den ernsthaften Willen Syriens zum Frieden mit Israel. Nach seinen Worten könnte innerhalb von sechs Monaten ein vorläufiger Vertrag zwischen beiden Staaten geschlossen werden. Am 15. April dementiert die syrische Regierung, dass sich Suleiman in ihrem Namen in Israel aufgehalten habe.

11.04.2007:

Der palästinensische Finanzminister Salam Fayyad bittet in Brüssel die Europäische Union um die Wiederaufnahme ihrer Finanzhilfe und beziffert den Bedarf auf knapp eine Million Euro, um eine humanitäre Katastrophe abzuwenden. Fayyads Gesprächspartnerin, die EU-Außenkommissarin Benita Ferrero-Waldner, weist darauf hin, dass 2006 rund 700 Millionen Euro in die palästinensischen Gebiete geflossen seien, und betont, dass die künftigen Hilfen an die Erfüllung der drei Prinzipien des Nahost-Quartetts gebunden seien. Bis dahin werde die Europäische Union gemäß den Vorgaben des „Temporary International Mechanism (TIM)“[54] verfahren.

08.04.2007:

Die arabische Zeitung „a-Sinara“ aus Nazareth berichtet, dass der Abgeordnete Azmi Bishara von der arabischen „Nationaldemokratischen Liste (Balad)“ nach seinen gegenwärtigen Aufenthalten in arabischen Ländern und in Europa sein Parlamentsmandat, das er seit 1996 innehat, aufgeben und nicht nach Israel zurückkehren wolle. Die Gründe für seine Absicht bleiben zunächst unklar. Zu den Spekulationen gehören Bemühungen in der Knesset, Bisharas Immunität aufzuheben, weil er in der Vergangenheit mehrfach die „Feindstaaten Syrien und Libanon“ besucht und für Spenden zugunsten von „Hisbollah“ geworben habe. Von politischem Gewicht dürfte Bisharas Überzeugung sein, dass ein palästinensischer Staat in der Westbank und im Gazastreifen mit Hauptstadt in arabischen Teil Jerusalems immer unwahrscheinlicher wird und dass Bishara deshalb sein ursprünglich auf das Verhältnis von Juden und Arabern in Israel bezogenes Konzept vom „Staat für alle seine Bürger“ auf den gesamten Raum zwischen Mittelmeer und Jordan ausdehnen will, was seinen Abschied von der Zweistaatenlösung bedeutet. Erziehungsministerin Yuli Tamir und der Vorsitzende von „Meretz/Yachad“ Yossi Beilin werfen Bishara vor, dass er mit seinen Überzeugungen den jüdischen Charakter Israels aushöhlen wolle. Am 12. April teilt Bishara mit, dass sein geplantes Ausscheiden aus der Knesset nach elfjähriger

Zugehörigkeit in den Nachstellungen begründet liege, denen er aufgrund seiner politischen Arbeit ausgesetzt sei. Die Bestätigung von Meldungen, dass er nicht nach Israel zurückkehren wolle, fehlt in seiner Mitteilung, zumal da seine Ehefrau und die gemeinsamen Kinder in Israel leben. Am 22. April unterstreicht Bishara von Kairo aus seinen Beschluss, sein Parlamentsmandat zurückzugeben. Nachdem die israelischen Sicherheitsbehörden ihren Vorwurf des Hochverrats wiederholten, weist Bishara sie am 3. Mai in einem Beitrag für die „Los Angeles Times“ mit Entschiedenheit zurück, verlangt jedoch von Israel die Respektierung der arabischen Geschichte und kollektiven Identität. Er bleibe bei seiner Überzeugung, dass Israel ein Staat für all seine Bürger werden müsse [55].

05.04.2007:

Hohe muslimische Würdenträger in Jerusalem und in der Westbank verwahren sich gegen die zweitägige Absperrung der Ibrahim-Moschee in Hebron aus Anlass der jüdischen Pessach-Feiertage.

03.04.2007:

In einem Interview mit „Le Monde“ verweist der palästinensische Außenminister Ziad Abu Amr auf die weitreichenden Veränderungen der palästinensischen Positionen hin, die sich in der Erklärung von Mekka vom 8. Februar zwischen „Fatah“ und „Hamas“ wiederfinden würden. Besonders erstaunt zeigt sich Abu Amr über die Schnelligkeit und das Ausmaß der Transformation von „Hamas“: Noch vor einem Jahr habe sie einen palästinensischen Staat in den Grenzen von 1967 und die Rolle der PLO als einziger Repräsentantin des palästinensischen Volkes mit einem Verhandlungsauftrag abgelehnt. Nunmehr könne die neue Regierung der nationalen Einheit den Europäern und den USA nicht länger als Beleg für die Fortsetzung ihres Finanzembargos dienen. Die Erklärung von Riyadh vom 28. März sei ein ernsthaftes

Verhandlungsangebot an Israel. Das Problem bestehe darin, dass sich Israel mit Rückendeckung in Europa und in den USA Verhandlungen über den Endstatus verweigere.

Der Generalsekretär der Arabischen Liga, der ägyptische Diplomat Amr Moussa, kündigt ein Treffen von zehn arabischen Außenministern – Ägypten, Saudi-Arabien, Jordanien, Syrien, Libanon, PLO, Marokko, Tunesien, Bahrein und Qatar – in zwei Wochen an, um Israel zur Annahme der Erklärung von Riyadh vom 28. März aufzufordern.

02.04.2007:

Nach Gesprächen in Jerusalem und Ramallah verwahrt sich die Fraktionsvorsitzende der Demokraten im US-Repräsentantenhaus Nancy Pelosi gegen Kritik aus dem Weißen Haus gegen ihre Reise nach Damaskus. Sie setze „große Hoffnungen“ in ihre Gespräche mit der syrischen Regierung, wird Pelosi zitiert, die mit ihrer Delegation zuvor in Beirut mit Politikern der Regierung und der Opposition zusammenkommt und am Nachmittag von Außenminister Walid Mualem in Damaskus empfangen wird. Am 31. März waren bereits die Abgeordneten Frank Wolf, Joe Pitts und Robert Aderholt von Präsident Bashar Assad empfangen worden. Israels Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert weist Pilosis Mitteilung zurück, dass er ihr eine Botschaft zur Wiederaufnahme von Verhandlungen nach Damaskus mitgegeben habe. Israels Position werde sich nicht ändern, solange Syrien zur „Achse des Terrors“ gehöre und Terrorgruppen unterstütze. Am 11. April schreibt Robert Malley, der in der Ära Bill Clintons zu dessen wichtigsten Nahost-Beratern gehörte und heute die Orient-Abteilung der „International Crisis Group“ leitet, in den „Los Angeles Times“, dass Washingtons Vorwurf absurd sei, Pelosi habe durch ihren Besuch in Damaskus das dortige „Paria-Regime“ aufgewertet. Die USA seien weltweit nicht weniger als Syrien isoliert. Solange Washington an seinem feindlich gesinnten Kurs festhalte, werde Damaskus keinen Anlass

sehen, seine Verbindungen zu Iran, zur „Hisbollah“ und zu anderen Terrorgruppen aufzugeben.

01.04.2007:

Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert kündigt seine Bereitschaft zu einem Sondierungstreffen mit den gemäßigten arabischen Regierungen an, also vor allem außer Syrien. Zuvor forderte Olmert in Anwesenheit von Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel die deutsche EU-Ratspräsidentschaft auf, „alle arabischen Staatsoberhäupter“ einzuladen. Olmerts Angebot stößt bei Palästinensern und auf der arabischen Seite auf Zurückhaltung und Skepsis. Der neue palästinensische Außenminister Ziad Abu Amr erklärt bei einem Besuch in Paris am 2. April, seine Regierung habe „nicht das Gefühl, auf israelischer Seite einen Partner für den Frieden zu haben“. Auch ein Beraster von Präsident Machmud Abbas äußert sich ähnlich: Israel wolle eine Normalisierung mit der arabiaschen Welt, ohne einen Preis zu bezahlen. Nach Auskunft aus Riyadh solle Israel zunächst die arabische Friedensinitiative akzeptieren, bevor ein Treffen zustande kommen könne. Für den Vorsitzenden von „Meretz/Yachad“, Yossi Beilin, verschanzt sich Olmert hinter „sinnlosen Worthülsen“, statt „den Stier bei den Hörnern zu packen“.

Der kanadische Politologe Bernard Avishai berichtet von einer Tagung zum palästinensischen Flüchtlingsproblem an der „Al-Quds University“ in Abu Dhis östlich von Jerusalem, bei der noch einmal die verschiedenen Überlegungen zu seiner Lösung diskutiert worden sind, vor allem die in Taba im Januar 2001[56] getroffenen Vereinbarungen, die in den Entwurf der **„Genfer Initiative“** mündeten. Avishai vertritt die Auffassung, dass jenseits aller ideologischen Gründe die Globalisierung der israelischen Wirtschaft die Regierung zum Frieden mit den arabischen Nachbarn zwingen werde[57].

März 2007

31.03.2007:

Bei ihrem informellen Treffen in Bremen am 30./31. März bestätigen die 27 Außenminister der Europäischen Union ihre ablehnende Haltung gegenüber den Regierungsmitgliedern von „Hamas", wollen aber mit den Mitgliedern des „Arabischen Nahost-Quartetts" Ägypten, Jordanien, Saudi-Arabien und den Vereinigten Arabischen Emiraten zusammenarbeiten. Möglichkeiten der finanziellen Hilfe für die Autonomiebehörde sollen gemäß dem „Vorläufigen Internationalen Mechanismus (TIM)" vom Sommer 2006[58] geprüft werden.

In einem Beitrag für die „Los Angeles Times" plädiert der palästinensische Finanzminister Salam Fayyad für das Ende des internationalen Finanzboykotts der Autonomiebehörde und beklagt die anhaltende israelische Abriegelung der Grenzen sowie die Einbehaltung von Steuern und Abgaben durch Israel. Die Schaffung eines lebensfähigen und unabhängigen Staates Palästina sei der Ausweg aus dem fast sechzig Jahre andauernden Konflikt[59].

In einem Gastkommentar für die „International Harald Tribune" am 31. März/1. April bezeichnet der bis zu seiner Emeritierung in Harvard lehrende US-amerikanische Sozialethiker Herbert C. Kelman Vorbedingungen, die palästinensischen Verhandlungspartnern abverlangt würden, als „unausgewogen, unrealistisch und unnötig". Auch wenn die Anerkennung des Existenzrechts Israels unerlässlich sei, sei es ein Fehler, den Beginn oder die Fortsetzung von Verhandlungen von einem völligen Ende jeglicher Gewalt abhängig zu machen. Eine solche Vorbedingung würde den gegen Verhandlungen eingestellten Kräften die Handhabe liefern, sie zu torpedieren. Vielmehr sei es vernünftig, „ein Maß an Doppeldeutigkeit" („a degree of ambiguity") zu akzeptieren und die Klärung ideologischer Differenzen der Dynamik des

Verhandlungsprozesses zu überlassen. Flexibilität müsse durch das Prinzip der Gegenseitigkeit von Handlungen und Verpflichtungen ergänzt werden: Israel müsse sich an dieselben Bedingungen halten wie die Palästinenser. Kelman nennt in diesem Zusammenhang insbesondere die Waffenruhe, Militäraktionen in den besetzten Gebieten und die Siedlungstätigkeit. In derselben Ausgabe der Zeitung beklagt Thomas L. Friedman bei Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice die Kluft zwischen ihrer Reisefreudigkeit und dem Mangel an einer kohärenten Strategie. Deshalb würden nur die „bad guys" Geschichte im Vorderen Orient schreiben. Friedman ruft Washington zur Rückkehr zum „Clinton-Plan" auf, praktisch also zu den sog. „Parametern" des Präsidenten vom Dezember 2000[60], die drei Jahre später in den Entwurf der **„Genfer Initiative"** mündeten. Einen Tag zuvor, am 30. März, hatte auch Gilad Sher, Leiter des Büros von Ministerpräsident Ehud Barak und Mitglied des Verhandlungsteams in Camp David im Juli 2000, die „Parameter" als Ausgangspunkte für die endgültige Regelung des Konflikts bezeichnet.

30.03.2007:

In Interviews mit „Haaretz" und „Jerusalem Post" aus Anlass des bevorstehenden Pessach-Festes kündigt Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert an, dass seine Regierung keinen einzigen palästinensischen Flüchtling die Wiederansiedlung in Israel gestatten werde. 1948 sei das Problem durch die arabischen Staaten verursacht worden, so dass Israel keine Verpflichtung akzeptieren werde. Dagegen wiederholte Olmert seine „fundamentalen Prinzipien" von den zwei Nationalstaaten Israel und Palästina, die miteinander in Frieden ohne Terror. Und Gewaltdrohungen leben. Auch wenn er sich von Abbas enttäuscht zeigt, weil der seit Juni 2006 festgehaltene Gefreite Gilad Shalit noch immer nicht frei sei, bezeichnet er den Präsidenten als den einzigen Verhandlungspartner von Statur und mit Autorität. Der umfassende Frieden mit der arabischen Welt sei innerhalb von fünf Jahren erreichbar.

Ari Shavit, einer der führenden israelischen Publizisten, veröffentlicht in „Haaretz“ eine beißende Kritik an Ehud Olmert, dem er persönliche Korruption und politische Inkompetenz in gefährlichem Ausmaß beschuldigt. Olmert sei der schlechteste Ministerpräsident, den das Land je gehabt habe. Für seinen Aufstieg trügen vor allem die Journalisten Verantwortung, die in ihren Interviews allzu häufig auf kritische Fragen verzichtet hätten.

Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel beginnt eine dreitägige Reise in den Nahen Osten zu Gesprächen mit dem palästinensischen Präsidenten Machmud Abbas (in Ramallah), in Israel (mit Ehud Olmert, Tsipi Livni und Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem), in Jordanien (mit König Abdullah II. in Aqaba) und in Libanon (mit Ministerpräsident Fuad Siniora in Beirut). Am 1. April fordert Abbas Merkel auf, den Boykott der Autonomiebehörde zu beenden, weil er darauf hinauslaufe, die Belagerung des palästinensischen Volkes zu billigen. In einem Kommentar der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung” beklagt Wolfgang Günter Lerch, dass die Bundeskanzlerin bei der Kontaktaufnahme nur Abbas einen Besuch abgestattet und andere palästinensische Politiker – gemeint sind angehörige von „Hamas“ – nicht getroffen habe. Lerch schreibt: Merkel „hätte sich nichts vergeben, wenn sie durch einen ungewöhnlichen, mutigen Schritt auf die palästinensische Seite zu versucht hätte, Wandlungsmöglichkeiten der palästinensischen Politik auszutesten und für die Europäer den Vorreiter zu spielen. Dies wäre – in des Wortes doppelter Bedeutung – ein wirklicher Anstoß gewesen.“ Von Olmert sei wenig zu erwarten gewesen, und „vollends unklar ist, was ein Treffen mit dem Verhinderungs-Politiker Netanjahu bringen sollte. Über ihn ist die Zeit längst hinweggegangen.“ Deutsche Zeitungen berichten am 3. April, dass Abbas vergeblich darum bemüht gewesen sei, Merkel zu einem Besuch in Bethlehem bei den dortigen kirchlichen Würdenträgern zu bewegen.

28.03.2007:

Zum Abschluss der Tagung der Arabischen Liga im saudischen Riyadh verabschieden die Staats- und Regierungschefs der 20 Staaten und der Palästinensischen Autonomiebehörde – Libyen nimmt nicht teil, während Libanon mit zwei Delegationen präsent ist, mit Präsident Emile Lahoud und Ministerpräsident Fuad Siniora, dieser auf einem Gästeplatz – eine Resolution, in der sie ihre Positionen gegenüber dem israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt vom März 2002 wiederholen. Keine Einigkeit erzielen sie bei der Bewertung der politischen Liga im Irak und in Libanon[61]. Nach Medienberichten beklagt der saudische König Abdullah während der Tagung, dass die arabische Welt für die Misere im Irak selbst verantwortlich sei, weil sie es zugelassen habe, „dass Kräfte von außen die Zukunft der Region mitbestimmen“. In einer Erklärung beschränkt sich die israelische Regierung am 29. März auf die Wiederholung ihrer Grundpositionen[62]. Der Vorsitzende von „Meretz/Yachad“, Yossi Beilin, bezeichnet die saudische Initiative als „totale Umkehr“ der „drei Neins“ der arabischen Gipfelkonferenz in Khartum (28.08.-02.09.1967). Die jetzige Erklärung von Riyadh sei außerdem eine ermutigende Antwort auf das „al-Qaida-Phänomen“ und die iranische Nukleardrohung[63]. In der Wochenausgabe der Zeitung „Al-Ahram (Die Pyramiden)“ verweist die Kommentatorin Dina Ezzat auf das gewachsene Gewicht Saudi-.Arabiens in der arabischen Welt, bei den Palästinensern, in Libanon, im Sudan und in Somalia. Fazit: Saudi-Arabien nehme den Fahrersitz ein, auch wenn es nicht zuviel Aufmerksamkeit wünsche – in Kairo verspüre die Intelligentsia einen gewissen Schock –, weil die Stabilität der Region vom Ende des israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikts abhänge[64]. Doch nach Auffassung hoher arabischer und US-amerikanischer Repräsentanten werde der Irak der Test zur den saudischen Einfluss sein.

26.03.2007:

Im Interview mit dem Zürcher „Tages-Anzeiger“ zeigt sich der Direktor des Büros der **„Genfer Initiative“** in Tel Aviv, Gadi Baltiansky, erfreut darüber, dass dieser Entwurf immer größere Zustimmung finde[65].

Der stellvertretende Ministerpräsident Shimon Peres vertritt in „Haaretz“ erneut die Auffassung, dass der Übergang von einer territorial gebundenen Wirtschaft zu einer Wirtschaft der Wissenschaft und Technologie zwar keine Grenzen, aber Beziehungen verändere. Deshalb setzt er sich für den israelisch-palästinensisch-jordanischen „Peace Valley Plan“ ein, der in einer ersten Phase auf einer Länge von 520 Kilometern einen Kanal vom Roten Meer ins Tote Meer vorsieht, um die dortige Verdunstung zu stoppen, und dann einen Industriepark, einen gemeinen Flughafen, eine Touristenindustrie, landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgemeinschaften aufbauen soll, um später zwei Eisenbahnlinien in ost-westlicher Richtung zu installieren[66].

Nach ihrem Besuch in Assuan stellt sich US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice in Kairo der internationalen Presse. Dabei betont sie, dass George W. Bush bei seinem Amtsantritt vom Fehlschlag der Gipfelkonferenz mit Bill Clinton, Ehud Barak und Yasser Arafat in Camp David (Juli 2000) belastet gewesen sei, und vertritt die Auffassung, dass im Gegensatz zu damals die Zweistaatenregelung von „Menschen“ – gemeint sind Israelis, Palästinenser und die arabischen Staaten – nicht akzeptiert worden sei. Dafür habe Bush den Grundstein gelegt. Gleichzeitig wiederholt sie ihre Bemerkung vom Vortag, dass Washington vom bevorstehenden Treffen der Arabischen Liga in Riyadh keine Zusätze zur Erklärung vom März 2002[67] verlangt habe. Es handele sich um eine arabische Initiative, die aber hoffentlich zur Grundlage für eine aktive Diplomatie werden könne[68].

25.03.2007:

In der gemeinsamen Pressekonferenz mit Machmud Abbas betont Condeleezza Rice in Ramallah, dass es von Seiten der USA keine Bitten um Erweiterung der Erklärung der Arabischen Liga vom März 2002 im Blick auf die bevorstehende Konferenz in Riyadh gebe. Es komme darauf an, ein Gespräch („conversation“) mit Fortschritten für den „politischen Horizont“ in Gang zu setzen. Rice unterstreicht erneut die Bedeutung der „Road Map“[69], die allerdings durch einige „Details“ ergänzt werden müsse, um den Endstatus zu erreichen. Für George W. Bush genieße die Errichtung palästinensischen Staates an der Seite Israels höchste Priorität – „ich glaube, er bezeichnete ihn sogar als Palästina“. Andererseits bindet Rice die Entstehung des Staates an die Vorbedingung des Endes der palästinensischen Gewalt. Auf eine weitere Frage, warum er entgegen seiner früheren Zusage die Freilassung des im Juni 2006 entführten israelischen Gefreiten Gilad Shalit nicht erreicht habe, weist Abbas darauf hin, dass auch die Freilassung palästinensischer Gefangener in Israel ungeklärt sei[70].

In seiner wöchentlichen Übersicht berichtet das „Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI)”, dass vor wenigen Tagen Professor Mohammed Dajani von der Al-Quds-Universität in Jerusalem eine neue islamische Partei gegründet habe, die als gemäßigte Gegenspielerin bei den nächsten Parlamentswahlen im Jahr 2009 neben „Hamas“ und „Fatah“ als drittgrößte Gruppierung in den „Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC)“ einziehen will. Im Vorfeld der Gipfelkonferenz der Arabischen Liga in Riyadh fordert IPCRI außerdem die israelische Regierung auf, in einer Erklärung das Recht des palästinensischen Volkes auf einen eigenen souveränen Staat zum Ausdruck zu bringen.

Michael Borgstede berichtet in der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen Sonntagszeitung“ vom Schicksal junger arabisch-palästinensischer Frauen in Israel, die „Ehrenmorden“ von Familienangehörigen zum Opfer fallen, ohne dass der Polizei die Ergreifung der Täter gelingt.

24.03.2007:

Nach internationalen Medienberichten hat Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert in den vergangenen Wochen zum zweiten Mal ein geheimes Treffen mit hohen Vertretern der saudischen Regierung gehabt. Das erste soll vor sechs Monaten in Amman stattgefunden haben.

23.03.2007:

In einem Kommentar der „New York Times" begrüßt Thomas Friedman die bevorstehende Gipfelkonferenz der Arabischen Liga in Riyadh, die auch einen „emotionalen Durchbruch" für den israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt bringen müsse. Deshalb empfiehlt er dem saudischen König Abdullah, nach Jerusalem zu reisen und das Friedensangebot dem israelischen Volk persönlich zu überbringen. Wenn der König dem Vorbild von Anwar Sadat im November 1977 folge, könnte der Konflikt ein für allemal beendet werden. Friedman schlägt im Falle der Reise vier Schritte vor:

1. den Besuch der Al-Aqza-Moschee, wo er den moslemischen Anspruch auf den arabischen Ostteil Jerusalems unterstreichen solle;
2. die Ansprache vor dem palästinensischen Parlament in Ramallah mit dem Ziel, die palästinensische Bereitschaft zum Frieden im Austausch für den Rückzug Israels auf die Linien von 1967 arabischerseits zu unterstützen;
3. den Besuch in Yad vaShem, um zu betonen, dass die moslemische Welt die Leugnung der Shoah ablehne;
4. die Ansprache vor der Knesset in Jerusalem, um seine Friedensinitiative der israelischen Öffentlichkeit zu überbringen.

Abschließend wägt Friedman die Risiken und Chancen einer solchen Initiative gegeneinander ab und erinnert daran, dass er es gewesen sei, der dem damaligen Kronprinzen Abdullah im Februar 2002 erstmals seinen Friedenplan vorgestellt habe[71].

22.03.2007:

Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert äußert sich zufrieden über die Entscheidung des Nahost-Quartetts[72], an den drei Bedingungen für die Wiederaufnahme der Finanzhilfe für die Autonomiebehörde festzuhalten: Anerkennung des Existenzrechts Israels, Verzicht auf Gewalt, Achtung unterzeichneter Vereinbarungen. Gegen Gespräche mit Präsident Machmud Abbas gebe es keine Bedenken. Gleichzeitig bezeichnet er das saudische Friedensangebot von Beirut im März 2002 als eine „geeignete Grundlage“ für Verhandlungen. Der „Haaretz“-Redakteur Akiva Eldar nennt den Wettbewerb zwischen Israel und dem Nahost-Quartett um die Fortsetzung des Boykotts der Autonomiebehörde ein Rennen zwischen einem Paddel- und einem Motorboot.

21.03.2007:

Der schwedische Außenminister Carl Bildt kündigt für das kommende Wochenende Begegnungen mit der palästinensischen und der israelischen Regierung an. Die Regierung in Jerusalem lässt mitteilen, dass sie Bildt nicht empfangen werde. Nach Presseberichten plant auch das EU-Mitglied Belgien, vertreten durch Außenminister Karel de Gught, in den kommenden Tagen Begegnungen mit palästinensischen Regierungsmitgliedern. Am Abend des 21. März trifft er mit Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert zusammen.

Das israelische Parlament verlängert das Staatsbürgergesetz bis Juli 2008 und verschärft es. Es untersagt Heiraten zwischen israelischen Staatsbürgern und Angehörigen von „Feindstaaten“: Syrien, Libanon, Irak, Iran und Palästinensern aus der Westbank und dem Gazastreifen im Alter von 18 bis 35 Jahren bei Männern und 18 bis 25 Jahren bei Frauen.

Das israelische Parlament verabschiedet ein Gesetz zur Gründung einer Akademie für die arabische Sprache. Sie soll ein Ort der

Forschung und der Pflege der arabischen Sprache, ihrer Dialekte, der Kultur und der Folklore in Israel werden.

Das jordanische Unterhaus ändert das strittige Presse- und Publikationsgesetz und streicht die Klauseln, die die Festsetzung von Journalisten erlauben. Statt dessen können sie mit Geldstrafen bis zu 28.000 Dinar (rund 40.000 US-Dollar) bestraft werden, wenn sie die Religion herabsetzen, den Propheten Mohammed beleidigen, zu sektiererischer Zwietracht oder zum Rassismus aufstacheln, Personen verletzen sowie falsche Informationen und Gerüchte streuen.

20.03.2007:

In einem Interview mit dem US-„Council on Foreign Relations" bescheinigt der frühere US-amerikanische Unterstaatssekretär und langjährige Botschafter in Israel, Martin Indyk, dem State Department unter Führung von Condoleezza Rice den festen Willen, sich ernsthaft mit dem israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt zu befassen und damit von der politischen Abstinenz der Bush-Administration Abschied zu nehmen.

Unter Berufung auf „amnesty international" äußert sich das „Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network" mit Sitz in Kopenhagen und Brüssel besorgt über die geplanten Verfassungsänderungen in Ägypten, die sie als die schwerste Erosion politischer und rechtlicher Standards seit 26 Jahren bezeichnet[73]. So verbietet der neue Artikel 5 Parteien „mit einem religiösen Hintergrund". Unabhängige Kandidaten dürfen künftig nicht für das Amt des Staatspräsidenten kandidieren. „Terrorfälle" kann der Staatspräsident an Militärgerichte überweisen, gegen deren Urteil keine Berufung möglich ist. An dem Referendum beteiligen sich nach amtlichen Angaben lediglich 27,1 Prozent, von denen 75,9 Prozent der Vorlage zustimmen. Unabhängige Beobachter wie die „Ägyptische Organisation für Menschenrechte" sprechen lediglich von sechs bis neun Prozent

Beteiligung, nachdem alle wichtigen Oppositionsgruppen zum Boykott aufgerufen haben. An den Wahllokalen sollen zivil gekleidete Sicherheitskräfte Demonstranten verprügelt haben. Auf der gemeinsamen Pressekonferenz mit US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice am 26. März in Kairo verteidigt der ägyptische Außenminister Aboul Gheit die geplanten Verfassungsreformen mit dem Hinweis auf die terroristischen Bedrohungen, denen Ägypten ausgesetzt sei. Rice selbst betont auf Fragen, dass sie das Problem der Demokratieentwicklung angesprochen habe, dass aber jeder Staat seinen eigenen Weg finden müsse, wobei sie auf ihre persönlichen Erfahrungen in den Südstaaten der USA verweist.

19.03.2007:

Das Bestallungskomitee für rabbinische Gerichtshöfe ernennt zwölf neue Richter ultraorthodoxer Richtung. Die Ernennung ruft erhebliche Unruhe in der Bevölkerung hervor, weil damit Eheschließungen, Scheidungen und Konversionen zusätzlich erschwert werden. Seit 1991 sind aus der ehemaligen Sowjetunion mindestens 600.000 Menschen in Israel eingewandert, die nach dem jüdischen Religionsgesetz, der „Halacha“, keine Juden sind. Liberal-orthodoxe Rabbiner halten „das System“ für nicht reformierbar.

17.03.2007:

Die Mitglieder der neuen palästinensischen „Regierung der nationalen Einheit” aus „Hamas“, „Fatah“ und Unabhängigen stellen sich dem Parlament, dem „Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC)“, vor und legen den Amtseid ab. Für die Regierung stimmen 83 der 132 Mitglieder, drei Parlamentarier stimmen dagegen, 41 nehmen nicht teil, weil sie in israelischen Gefängnissen sitzen. An der Spitze der Regierung steht weiterhin Ismail Haniyeh als Ministerpräsident, während als neuer Außenminister, Finanzminister und Innenminister die Unabhängigen Ziad Abu Amr, Salam Fayyad und Hani Qawasmeh ihr Amt antreten[74]. Das Programm des neuen Kabinetts

kann seinen Charakter als Formelkompromiss zwischen den divergierenden Kräften schwerlich verbergen. Ganz abgesehen davon, dass es den Anschein erweckt, als ob es sich um eine voll handlungsfähige Regierung handelt, bezieht es sich auf „die gesegnete Vereinbarung von Mekka“ vom 8. Februar unter der Schirmherrschaft des saudischen Königs, die den Höhepunkt einer langen Dialogserie unter führender Beteiligung von Ägypten und Syrien bilde, und auf die Fortschreibung des sog. Gefangenenpapiers, das in Gestalt des „Nationalen Versöhnungsdokuments“ vom 28.Juni 2006[75] verabschiedet worden ist. Das Regierungsprogramm vom 17. März

– verspricht, in den 1967 besetzten Gebieten einen Staat mit der Hauptstadt Jerusalem zu errichten,
– verspricht, das Recht der Flüchtlinge auf Rückkehr in ihre Häuser und die Wiedergewinnung ihres Eigentums zu sichern,
– verspricht alle Gefangenen und Festgehaltenen zu befreien,
– verlangt die Wiederherstellung der Rolle der PLO als einziger legitimer Repräsentantin des palästinensischen Volkes, wo auch immer es lebe,
– fordert zum Widerstand gegen Israel und die USA „durch verschiedene Akte“ mit Schwerpunkt in den besetzten Gebieten und gleichzeitig zur politischen Aktion, zu Verhandlungen und zur Diplomatie auf,
– schätzt die Autonomiebehörde als Kern des künftigen Staates, bestätigt das verwaltungstechnische Verhandlungsmandat der PLO und des Präsidenten, dessen Ergebnisse dem Parlament zur Abstimmung vorgelegt werden müssten,
– bekennt sich zu den Prinzipien der Demokratie und zu regelmäßigen freien und „wahrhaft demokratischen“ Wahlen auf allen Ebenen sowie zur Freiheit der Medien,
– verurteilt den Einsatz von Waffen gegen innenpolitische Gegner,
– unterstützt den politischen Kampf der Bevölkerung im Gazastreifen um ihre Freiheit,
– unterstreicht die Notwendigkeit einer Reform des palästinensischen Sicherheitssystems und

– begrüßt die Rolle und die Präsenz von internationalen Solidaritätskomitees zur Unterstützung des palästinensischen Kampfes gegen die Okkupation, die Siedlungen und gegen den „Apartheidswall“[76].

In einer Stellungnahme lehnt die israelische Regierung am 18. März die neue Regierung ab, weil sie nicht die drei Voraussetzungen – Verzicht auf Gewalt, Anerkennung des Existenzrechts Israels und Zustimmung zu unterschriebenen Vereinbarungen – erfüllen wolle, erklärt aber die Bereitschaf zur Zusammenarbeit mit Machmud Abbas[77]. Da Verteidigungsminister Amir Peretz für Verhandlungen plädiert, fehlt in der Erklärung die Aufforderung an die internationale Gemeinschaft, auch dieser Autonomiebehörde keine Finanzmittel zu überweisen. In einer Stellungnahme schiebt Ehud Olmert diese Ermahnung nach. Der Sprecher des deutschen Auswärtigen Amtes setzt sich vorsichtig von der offiziellen israelischen Ablehnung mit der Bemerkung ab, man wolle zunächst abwarten; im gleichen Sinne äußert sich Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Washington. Die EU-Außenkommissarin Benita Ferrero-Waldner erklärt bei gleicher Gelegenheit, dass die EU ihre Hilfe für die Palästinenser bei Umgehung ihrer Regierung drei Monate lang auf der Grundlage des im Frühjahr 2006 vereinbarten „Temporary International Mechanism (TIM)“[78] fortsetzen wolle, weil es Hinweise gebe, dass auf die drei Voraussetzungen des Quartetts allmählich eingeschwenkt werde. „Wir werden die neue Regierung an ihren Handlungen und ihren Worten messen“, erklärt Ferrero-Waldner[79]. Die US-Regierung will Kontakte zu den „Fatah“-Mitgliedern der Regierung aufnehmen, betont jedoch die Fortsetzung ihrer Embargo-Politik. Als erster prominenter europäischer Politiker trifft Raymond Johansen, Staatssekretär im Außenministerium Norwegens – das nicht zur Europäischen Gemeinschaft gehört – am 19. März in Gaza-Stadt mit dem palästinensischen Ministerpräsidenten Imail Haniyeh zusammen. Die israelische Regierung sagt danach sein geplantes Treffen mit Kabinettsmitgliedern ab.

Gemäß einer internationalen Meinungsumfrage halten 56 Prozent der befragten Israelis die Aufrechterhaltung des Boykotts gegen die palästinensische Regierung für falsch, 39 Prozent befürworten seine Fortsetzung.

In Long Island (USA) stirbt im Alter 63 Jahren die bis 2006 an der Universität Tel Aviv lehrende Linguistin Tanya Reinhart, die zuletzt das Buch „The Roadmap to Nowhere“ vorgelegt hat – eine heftige Kritik an der israelischen und US-amerikanischen Politik[80].

15.03.2007:

In seinem Beitrag „On Israel, America and AIPAC“ in der „New York Review of Books“ verteidigt der Milliardär und Mäzen George Soros, der in Ungarn die Shoah überlebt hat und heute US-amerikanischer Staatsbürger ist, das Recht von Juden auf Kritik an der israelischen Politik. Er beschuldigt die pro-israelische Lobby um das „American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)“, Kritik zu unterdrücken, und berichtet, dass er nach einer Versammlung, in der er politisch alternative Vorstellungen geäußert habe, in der Zeitschrift „The New Republic“ als „junges Rädchen in Hitlers Schubkarren“ bezeichnet worden sei, als ihm, den Dreizehnjährigen, der Vater in Budapest eine falsche Identität habe besorgen wollen. Soros fordert die jüdische Gemeinschaft in den USA auf, die Verteidiger der Israel-freundlichen Organisationen darauf hinzuweisen, dass sie durch ihre Legitimierung der israelischen Politik der Okkupation, der Kontrolle und der Unterdrückung in der Westbank und in Ost-Jerusalem den Antisemitismus fördern. Dass AIPAC erfolgreich die Kritik unterdrücke, habe der Beschuldigung den Weg geebnet, dass es eine allmächtige zionistische Konspiration gebe[81]. Ein Sprecher von AIPAC erklärt, dass sich die Organisation nicht zu Soros’ Beitrag äußern werde. Am 16. März macht der britische „Economist“ einen „Klimawandel“ aus, dem sich AIPAC von Seiten arabischstämmiger US-Amerikaner, liberalen Juden und außenpolitischen Experten gegenübersehe, und fordert „eine offene Debatte“ über die

Nahostpolitik der USA und verlangt von AIPAC „eine positive Rolle in dieser Debatte, wenn sie eine machtvolle Kraft in der amerikanischen Politik bleiben will“. Am 18. März beklagt in der „New York Times“ der vielfach ausgezeichnete Kolumnist Nicholas Kristof, der in letzter Zeit besonders über den Völkermord in Darfur geschrieben hat, dass es unter den Republikanern und Demokraten im Kongress keine ernsthafte politische Debatte über die US-amerikanische Politik gegenüber Israelis und Palästinensern gebe. Wie Soros verweist Kristof darauf, dass in Israel selbst lebhafte Debatten um den politischen Kurs der Regierung stattfinden.

14.03.2007:

In der gemeinsamen Pressekonferenz mit Tsipi Livni begrüßt US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice die saudische Friedensinitiative vom März 2002, auch wenn sie noch keine Verhandlungsposition beschreibe[82]. Niemals seit der ersten zionistischen Einwanderung sei die arabische Welt so bereit gewesen, mit dem jüdischen Staat eine Regelung zu treffen, unterstreicht der frühere israelische Außenminister Shlomo Ben-Ami die Bedeutung der Beiruter Erklärung in einem Meinungsbeitrag am 18. März für „Haaretz“.

Danny Rubinstein bezeichnet in „Haaretz“ die Frage nach der politischen Zukunft Jerusalems als zentrales Problem. So wie der Staat Israel nicht existieren würde, wenn das Recht der palästinensischen Flüchtlinge auf Rückkehr durchgesetzt werde, so könne ein palästinensischer Staat nicht ohne Ost-Jerusalem als Hauptstadt existieren. Die Palästinenser hätten die berechtigte Sorge, dass sie Jerusalem verlieren. Die Trennungszäune und -mauern um den Ostteil der Stadt seien nahezu vollendet. Während Israel behaupte, dass es sich nicht um politische Grenzen handele, schauten die Kreuzungsbefestigungen im Norden, Osten und Süden mehr und mehr wie Grenzanlagen zwischen Ländern aus, so dass die palästinensischen Proteste in Kauf genommen werden könnten. Gemäß dem israelisch-jordanischen Friedensvertrag vom September

1994, in dem Jordanien der Schutz der heiligen moslemischen Stätten zugesprochen worden ist, seien beide Regierungen darauf bedacht, der Autonomiebehörde keine Kontrolle über die Al-Aqza-Moschee einzuräumen. Rubinstein schließt mit der düsteren Prognose, dass der Traum von „zwei Staaten für zwei Völker“ ohne Ost-Jerualem für die Palästinenser beendet sei[83].

Erstmals seit mehr als zwei Jahren besucht der EU-Außenbeauftragte Javier Solana Syrien und trifft in Damaskus mit Präsident Bashar Assad, Vizepräsident Faruk Shara und Außenminister Walid Mualem zusammen. Dabei fordert Solana Syrien dazu auf, einen Beitrag zum Frieden und zur Sicherheit in Libanon im Rahmen der UN-Resolution 1701 zu leisten, zur Aufklärung an dem Mord an dem früheren Ministerpräsidenten Rafik Hariri am 14. Februar 2005 sowie zum Abbau der Spannungen im Irak beizutragen, und verlangt die Unterbindung des Waffenschmuggels über seine Grenzen. Nur dann könne Damaskus mit der Aufhebung der internationalen Isolation rechnen. Während Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier Solanas Besuch ausdrücklich begrüßt, werden in Israel Stimmen der Empörung laut, weil der EU-Außenbeauftragte die europäische Unterstützung bei der Wiedergewinnung der von Israel besetzten Golanhöhen zugesagt habe. Solana wird mit den Worten an die Adresse Mualems zitiert: „Wir möchten so sehr wie möglich darauf hinarbeiten, dass Ihr Land Syrien das Gebiet wiederbekommt, das 1967 weggenommen worden ist.“ Nur der Vorsitzende von „Meretz“, Yossi Beilin, begrüßt den Besuch Solanas, weil er den Beginn von Verhandlungen zwischen Israel und Syrien erneuern könne.

Der Präsident des „World Jewish Congress“ Edgar Bronfman entlässt mit sofortiger Wirkung seinen seit dreißig Jahren amtierenden Generalsekretär Israel Singer, dem er Vergehen der Korruption und der persönlichen Bereicherung vorwirft. Beobachter vermuten hinter der ohne Vorwarnung erfolgten Trennung darüber hinaus eine seit langem erkennbare Entfremdung zwischen

Bronfman und Singer mit ihren divergierenden politischen Temperamenten.

13.03.2007:

In einem Kommentar in „Haaretz“ zur Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel aus Anlass der Eröffnung des von der Axel-Springer-Stiftung ausgerichteten „Europe-Israel Dialogue“ am 10. März in Berlin werden Erklärungen in akademischen Kreisen und in der extremen Linken in Deutschland und in anderen Teilen Europas kritisiert, die Israel das Recht auf Existenz absprechen. Gleichzeitig verweist der Kommentator auf die israelische Politik gegenüber den Palästinensern, die es wert sei, deutlich verurteilt zu werden. Alle Regierungen hätten es versäumt und hielten daran fest, Gelegenheiten zur Versöhnung mit den arabischen Nachbarn ungenutzt verstreichen zu lassen, sie hätten die Siedlungstätigkeit verstärkt und eine destruktive Herrschaft der Okkupation, der Unterdrückung und der Korruption errichtet[84].

12.03.2007:

In einem Gespräch mit der „Jerusalem Post” fordert ein nicht genannter arabischer Diplomat Israel auf, das Recht der palästinensischen Flüchtlinge auf Rückkehr prinzipiell anzuerkennen, aber die Details den Verhandlungen zu überlassen. Die Beiruter Erklärung der Arabischen Liga vom März 2002 sei ein Rahmen für eine Regelung, deren Ausgang Verhandlungen überlassen bleiben müsse. Niemand behaupte, dass alle Flüchtlinge zurückkehren wollten, so dass der jüdische Charakter Israels nicht beschädigt werde. Der palästinensische Chefunterhändler Saeb Erakat wiederholt gegenüber dem Blatt das Interesse an einer „gerechten und vereinbarten Lösung“. Am selben Tag berichtet „Haaretz“, dass Außenministerin Tsipi Livni den saudischen Plan als „eine sehr positive Idee“ würdige, aber die Wahrnehmung des Rechts auf Rückkehr der palästinensischen Flüchtlinge ablehne.

Vor der Konferenz des „American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)“ in Washington betont Tsipi Livni, dass sich Israel und die USA inmitten eines Kampfes um die Zukunft der freien Welt befänden. Er könne nur gemeinsam gewonnen werden. An vorderster Stelle der Bedrohung nennt Livni Iran als Träger des Extremismus, vor dem die freie Welt nicht die Augen verschließen dürfe. Der internationalen Gemeinschaft müsse außerdem an der Schaffung eines unabhängigen und territorial souveränen Libanon gelegen sein, das die Milizen entwaffne und friedliche Beziehungen zu seinen Nachbarn entwickeln könne. Syrien, Iran und die „Hisbollah“ würden dies verhindern wollen. Im Blick auf das Verhältnis zu den Palästinensern wiederholt Livni die „Vision des Friedens“ im Rahmen der Zweistaatenlösung. Der Staat Palästina könne indes nur durch die Absage an den Terrorismus zustande kommen. Trotz der Enttäuschung über die innerpalästinensische Vereinbarung von Mekka habe Israel „die Tür zum Dialog mit den Gemäßigten“ nicht geschlossen. Gemäßigte müssten sich diesen Titel jedoch verdienen[85]. In einer Videoschaltung zur Konferenz äußert Ehud Olmert die Befürchtung, dass ein rascher Abzug US-amerikanischer Truppen aus Irak, für den in Washington Pläne ausgearbeitet würden, der Sicherheit Israels und der Region schade. Eine heftige Kritik an der jüdisch-evangelikalen Allianz in den USA übt Sarah Posner am 13. März auf der Internetseite „American Prospect“. Dem Gründer der „Christians United for Israel“, John Hagee, wirft Posner vor, vor AIPAC eine „höchst bizarre Armaggedon-Rhetorik“ verwendet zu haben[86]. Ob Hagee für Israel gut sei, sei uninteressant. Das wahre Problem bestehe darin, dass er eine Katastrophe für die Vereinigten Staaten und ihre Position in der Welt repräsentiere – nicht weil er die Juden zu sehr liebe oder tatsächlich insgeheim hasse, sondern weil er eine wachsende politische Bewegung anführe, die von Grund auf die Weltpolitik missverstehe. Sie verstärke den Eindruck, dass die USA von messianischen Kräften gelenkt würden, die im Widerspruch zu Frieden und Stabilität in der Welt stünden[87].

11.03.2007:
Zu Beginn der wöchentlichen Kabinettssitzung erklärt Ehud Olmert, dass Israel alles in seiner Macht Stehende tun wolle, um das tägliche Leben der Palästinenser zu erleichtern. Im Blick auf die Sitzung der Arabischen Liga am 28./29. März in Riyadh fügt Olmert die Erwartung hinzu, dass die positiven Elemente der Beiruter Erklärung der Arabischen Liga vom März 2002 bestätigt und die Verhandlungschancen zwischen Israel und den Palästinensern gestärkt würden.

Am Abend geht das dritte Treffen zwischen Ehud Olmert und Machmud Abbas in Jerusalem ohne greifbare Ergebnisse zu Ende. Weitere Gespräche werden vereinbart.

09.03.2007:
Israelische Zeitungen berichten, dass der US-amerikanisch-syrische Geschäftsmann Ibrahim Suleiman seine Bereitschaft erklärt habe, vor dem Auswärtigen und Sicherheitsausschuss der Knesset über seine informellen Gespräche mit dem ehemaligen Generaldirektor im israelischen Auswärtigen Amt, Alon Liel, unter Schweizer Vermittlung zu berichten. Dabei ging es um eine israelisch-syrische Verständigung[88]. In einem Interview mit dem arabischen Fernsehsender „al-Djazeera“ am 19. März bestätigt Syriens Präsident Bashar Assad die Kontakte.

Nach monatelangem Schweigen hat Oppositionsführer Benjamin Netanyahu („Likud”) in einem Interview mit „Haaretz” der Regierung Ehud Olmerts keine lange Amtszeit eingeräumt, weil sie auf allen Feldern versagt habe. Dabei lässt er erkennen, dass er mit Überläufern aus Olmerts „Kadima“ rechnet, um im Parlament ein Misstrauensvotum und dann Neuwahlen durchzusetzen. Gleichzeitig vertraut Netanyahu auf moderate Kräfte in der arabischen und

palästinensischen Politik, die auf der Grundlage gemeinsamer Werte an einer „Allianz“ mit Israel zur Abwehr des islamischen Extremismus und der iranischen Nuklearbedrohung interessiert seien. Iran sei verwundbarer, als es scheine, nämlich auf wirtschaftlichem Gebiet. Dabei setzt Netanyahu auf westliche Inhaber von Pensionsfonds im Wert von vielen Milliarden US-Dollar, die verkauft werden könnten, wenn Firmen Handels- und Wirtschaftsbeziehungen mit Teheran unterhalten (sog. Sekundärboykott). Wie vor der Generalversammlung des „United Jewish Appeal“ in Los Angeles im November 2006[89] zieht Netanyahu eine Parallele zwischen der westlichen „Appeasement“-Politik von 1938 gegenüber Nazi-Deutschland und der westlichen Gleichgültigkeit, die iranische Bedrohung Israels ernst zu nehmen. Gegenüber der Beiruter Erklärung der Arabischen Liga vom März 2002 zeigt er sich vorsichtig offen und zu „Konzessionen“ bereit[90].

08./09.2007:

Zum Abschluss des Treffens der europäischen Staats- und Regierungschefs in Brüssel verabschieden die Beteiligten eine Resolution, in der die Vereinbarung von „Hamas“ und „Fatah“ in Mekka begrüßt und zur Wahrung der politischen und territorialen Integrität und Unabhängigkeit Libanons gemäß der UN-Resolution 1701 aufgerufen wird[91].

08.03.2007:

„Haaretz“ berichtet jetzt, dass Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert bei seiner Befragung vor der Kommission unter Vorsitz von Richter Eliyahu Winograd[92] am 1. Februar eingeräumt habe, die Invasion nach Libanon Mitte Juli 2006 sei nicht das Ergebnis der Entführung zweier israelischer Soldaten gewesen, sondern die Entscheidung sei bereits im März 2006 gefallen. Als er mit Offizieren des Generalstabs verschiedene Bedrohungsszenarien an Israels Nordgrenze durchgespielt habe, hätten seine Gesprächspartner positiv auf die

Frage geantwortet, ob sie gegebenenfalls militärisch darauf vorbereitet seien – so etwa auf die Entführung israelischer Soldaten. Die Entscheidung des US-Sicherheitsrates in der Resolution 1701 sei von ihm verzögert worden, bis Israels Armee eine bessere Ausgangsstellung erreicht habe.

Nach einem Bericht derselben Zeitung hat ein Sprecher von „Hamas“ am Vortag ihr gegenüber die Zusage gemacht, dass seine Organisation und „Fatah“ einen vollständigen Waffenstillstand mit Israel, einschließlich des Beschusses vom Gazastreifen aus, anbieten, wenn sich die israelische Regierung nicht länger für den internationalen Boykott der Autonomiebehörde einsetze. Dieses Angebot werde Präsident Machmud Abbas bei dem voraussichtlich am 11. März stattfindenden Treffen mit Ehud Olmert vortragen.

Die palästinensische Menschenrechtsorganisation „Al-Haq (Das Recht)“ nimmt den Internationalen Frauentag zum Anlass, die Verletzung der Menschenwürde palästinensischer Frauen und Mädchen durch die israelische Besatzung und durch die Respektlosigkeit anzuklagen, die sie seitens der Autonomiebehörde in ihren Familien erdulden müssen[93].

Die Betonmauer in der Altstadt von Nikosia seit 1974, die die griechische von der türkischen Bevölkerung getrennt hat, wird von griechischen Zyprioten eingerissen, um einer Kreuzung Platz zu machen. Der Abriss wurde von Seiten der Regierung mit der Forderung nach Abzug der türkischen Truppen auf der anderen Seite verbunden. Erst dann könne die Öffnung der Grenze ernsthaft erwogen werden[94].

07.03.2007:

Vor beiden Häusern des US-Kongresses beklagt Jordaniens König Abdullah II. die fortgesetzte Gewalt im Nahen Osten, deren Gefahren auf die ganze Welt ausstrahlen. Die seit vierzig Jahren andauernde

israelische Besatzung habe auf allen Seiten bittere Gefühle der Enttäuschung und der Hoffnungslosigkeit hinterlassen. Doch eine Lösung könne nicht von außen aufgezwungen, sondern nur mittels Verständigung, Absprache und Kompromiss erreicht werden. Abdullah II. erinnert in diesem Zusammenhang an die Beiruter Erklärung der Staaten der Arabischen Liga vom März 2002, die international sowie in den moslemischen Staaten Unterstützung finde. Abschließend appelliert der König an die USA, bei der Suche nach dem Frieden zwischen den Palästinensern und Israel energisch zu helfen[95].

06.03.2007:

Mit „Empörung und Entsetzen" reagiert der israelische Botschafter in Deutschland, Shimon Stein, auf Äußerungen deutscher katholischer Bischöfe während ihres Besuchs in Israel und in den palästinensischen Gebieten[96]. So zitieren deutsche Zeitungen den Kölner Erzbischof Joachim Meisner nach dem Besuch des von Mauern umschlossenen Bethlehem mit den Worten: „Ich kann gar nicht hingucken. Für mich ist das ein Albtraum, das macht man mit Tieren, aber nicht mit Menschen." Meisners Sprecher dementiert das ihm zugeschriebene Zitat. Sein Augsburger Amtskollege Walter Mixa spricht von einer „ghettoartigen Situation", die „fast schon Rassismus" sei. Der Eichstätter Bischof Gregor Maria Hanke vergleicht seine Eindrücke beim Besuch in der Gedenkstätte „Yad vaShem" mit dem „Ghetto in Ramallah" und entschuldigt sich später. Der Sekretär der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Hans Langendörfer, weist die Kritik Steins zurück, bedauert aber „einige wenige sehr persönliche Bemerkungen … aus der emotionalen Betroffenheit Einzelner"[97]. Der Vorsitzende der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Karl Kardinal Lehmann, weist in seinem abgewogen formulierten Statement für die Presse auf die unhaltbar erscheinenden politischen Verhältnisse zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern hin und schreibt: „Als Bischöfe können wir keine politischen Vermittler sein und keine politischen Auswege aus der Misere vorzeichnen.

Wohl aber können und müssen wir immer wieder auf das Leiden der Menschen aufmerksam machen[98].“ Der Vorgang wird in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit kontrovers diskutiert[99]. Der an der Universität Montreal lehrende jüdisch-orthodoxe Historiker Yakob M. Rabkin beklagt in der „Baltimore Sun“ die wachsende Kluft zwischen den „zionistischen Advokaten Israels und säkularen und religiösen Juden, die den Zionismus und die Handlungen des Staates Israel zurückweisen oder in Frage stellen“. Darüber sei eine offene Debatte ausgebrochen, wie auch der Film „München“ von Steven Spielberg unter Beweis stelle, der die moralischen Kosten der chronischen Anhänglichkeit Israels auf die Macht beklagt habe und dafür von der Israel-Lobby in den USA böse attackiert worden sei[100].

05.03.2007:

Im Anschluss an das Treffen des „Israel-European Union Association Council“ in Brüssel lobt der deutsche Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier die guten wirtschaftlichen und wissenschaftlich-technologischen Beziehungen zwischen beiden Seiten. Steinmeiers israelische Kollegin Tsipi Livni weist auf dasselbe Wertesystem, dieselben Ziele und dieselben Interessen in den Beziehungen ihres Landes zu Europa hin, unterstreicht jedoch, dass Israel in einer anderen Weltgegend liege, in der ein Kampf zwischen Gemäßigten und Extremisten stattfinde, wobei sie besonders auf „Hamas“ und Iran aufmerksam macht. EU-Außenkommissarin Benita Ferrero-Waldner betont die Bedeutung der europäischen Nachbarschaftspolitik für Wissenschaft, Wirtschaft und die Liberalisierung des Handels[101].

Giora Eiland, früherer Sicherheitsberater von Ministerpräsident Ariel Sharon, zeigt sich skeptisch, ob Israel gegenwärtig mit Syrien in Verhandlungen für einen Friedensvertrag eintreten solle, und nennt dafür sechs Gründe: 1. Der Friedensvertrag würde nicht die iranische Nukleardrohung beseitigen. 2. Er würde nicht das palästinensische Problem lösen, weil es sich bei Syrien um einen Territorialkonflikt

handele. 3. Israel könne nicht gleichzeitig an zwei Fronten Verhandlungen führen, und eine Klärung mit Syrien würde von den Palästinensern als Schlag ins Gesicht betrachtet werden und könnte eine neue „Intifada“ auslösen. 4. Ein Friedensvertrag würde nach dem syrischen Abzug keine Entlastung im israelisch-libanesischen Verhältnis bringen. 5. Er würde nicht zu einem umfassenden Vertrag mit der arabischen Welt führen, solange das palästinensische Problem nicht gelöst sei. 6. Aus demselben Grund würde er die Stellung Israels in der Welt nicht verbessern[102].

03.03.2007:

Der saudische König Abdullah und der iranische Präsident Machmud Achmadinedjad vereinbaren in Riyadh die Eindämmung der Spannungen zwischen Schiiten und Sunniten, die Beendigung der konfessionell geprägten Gewalt im Irak und die Verhinderung ihrer Übertragung auf die anderen arabischen Länder. Unterschiedliche Darstellungen kursieren nach dem Treffen über die iranische Bereitschaft, die Beiruter Friedensinitiative vom März 2002 zu unterstützen. Am 5. März verbreitet die Website „Gulf in the Media“ einen Bericht, wonach sich Saudi-Arabien gegenüber einer Veränderung der Beiruter Erklärung offen zeige, Teheran vor einer Konfrontation mit den USA gewarnt werde und Libyen die Teilnahme an der arabischen Gipfelkonferenz Ende März in Riyadh ablehne[103].

Februar 2007

28.02.2007:

Gegenüber der palästinensischen Zeitung „Al-Ayyam (Die Tage)“ hat Israels Außenministerin Tsipi Livni die Beiruter Erklärung der Arabischen Liga vom März 2002[104] „in der gegenwärtigen Form“ zurückgewiesen. Besonders wendet sie sich gegen die Forderung nach Rückkehr der palästinensischen Flüchtlinge, die in dem

ursprünglich von Saudi-Arabien vorgelegten Entschließungsantrag nicht enthalten gewesen sei[105].

Das „Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel – Adalah“ legt aus Anlass seines zehnjährigen Bestehens einen Verfassungsvorschlag auf der Grundlage eines demokratischen, zweisprachigen und multikulturellen Staates Israel vor. In dem 9-Punkte-Plan wird auf die Universelle Menschenrechtserklärung von 1948 und auf den Entkolonialisierungsprozess nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg hingewiesen, bevor verlangt wird,

– dass Israel die Verantwortung für das Unrecht anerkenne, das dem palästinensischen Volk seit 1948 zugefügt worden sei, einschließlich des Rechts der palästinensischen Flüchtlinge auf Rückkehr gemäß der UN-Resolution 194 [vom Dezember 1948], des Rechts des palästinensischen Volkes auf Selbstbestimmung sowie der Verpflichtung Israels zum Rückzug aus den 1967 besetzten Gebieten;
– dass Israel das Leben der arabisch-palästinensischen Bürger des Staates seit unvordenklichen Zeiten in ihrer Heimat einschließlich ihrer nationalen Identität anerkenne,
– dass anerkannt werde, dass der arabisch-palästinensischen Minderheit seit 1948 schweres Unrecht zugefügt worden sei,
– dass anerkannt werde, dass die Würde und die persönliche Freiheit die Grundlage für die Aufrechterhaltung einer gerechten Gesellschaft seien, und
– dass anerkannt werde, dass kein anderes Volk besetzt werden dürfe und völlige Gleichheit zwischen den jüdischen und arabischen Staatsbürgern hergestellt werden müsse[106].

Anlass des Offenen Briefes ist eine europäisch-israelische Konferenz am 5. März.

In ihrem jüngsten Bericht wirft die renommierte „International Crisis Group“, die gegenwärtig von dem ehemaligen britischen EU-Außenkommissar Chris Patten und dem früheren US-Botschafter Thomas Pickering geleitet wird, dem Nahost-Quartett sowie „Hamas“

und „Fatah“ völliges Versagen im vergangenen Jahr 2006 vor. Die westliche Verpflichtung auf die Demokratie im Vorderen Orient sei von Grund auf diskreditiert. „Hamas“ sei, auch wenn schwach, stark genug, ihren Weg fortzusetzen. „Fatah“ habe nichts getan, um ihre Glaubwürdigkeit wiederherzustellen, so dass die Ankündigung von Neuwahlen oder eines Referendums keinen Ausweg aus der Krise biete. Die Gewalt zwischen Israel und den Palästinensern habe ihre Fortsetzung gefunden: „Nach fast jedem einleuchtenden Standard – Regierungsfähigkeit, Sicherheit, Wirtschaft, Institutionen-Aufbau und Friedensprozess – hat es nur Rückschritte gegeben.“ Die Vereinbarung von Mekka biete eine Chance, das katastrophale Abgleiten in den Bürgerkrieg aufzuhalten. Im Außenverhältnis habe sie zwar die drei Voraussetzungen des „Quartetts“ zur Wiederaufnahme der Hilfe für die Palästinenser nicht erfüllt: Die neue Regierung wolle die alten Vereinbarungen zwischen Israel und der PLO „respektieren“, sich jedoch nicht an sie „halten“; sie habe Israel nicht anerkannt, und sie habe der Gewalt nicht abgeschworen. Was jedoch zähle, sei, ob die künftige Regierung einem Waffenstillstand zustimme; ob sie von Tag zu Tag mit Israel zusammenarbeite, ob sie sich mit Verhandlungen zwischen Machmud Abbas und Israel einverstanden erkläre und ob sie bereit sei, der Bevölkerung eine Endstatus-Vereinbarung in einem Referendum vorzulegen und das Ergebnis zu respektieren. Würde dies erreicht werden, sollte der internationale Boykott sofort erleichtert und „Hamas“ damit ein Impuls zur weiteren Mäßigung eingeräumt werden. Kritisch an die Adresse der sog. internationalen Staatengemeinschaft gerichtet, nennt die „International Crisis Group“ die Vereinbarung von Mekka eine Voraussetzung und kein Hindernis für einen erneuerten Friedensprozess. „If the Quartet adopts the position that little has changed, the ensuing political and financial isolation might kill the agreement between Hamas und Fatah virtually at birth.” Nach Berichten habe es im Gazastreifen und in geringerem Ausmaß in der Westbank einen erheblichen Anstieg des Drogenkonsums, der Prostitution, der Kleinkriminalität und anderer

Phänomene gegeben, die üblicherweise mit wachsender Armut einhergehen.

27.02.2007:

Das „Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN)“ – der Zusammenschluss von über achtzig europäischen Menschenrechtsorganisationen – drückt in einem Offenen Brief an die EU-Außenminister, an den EU-Außenbeauftragten Javier Solana sowie an die EU-Kommissarin für auswärtige Angelegenheiten Benita Ferrero-Waldner ihre Sorgen vor der Menschenrechtslage in Israel und in den besetzten palästinensischen Gebieten aus und fordert die Europäische Union auf, dass ihre weitere Zusammenarbeit mit Israel von der israelischen Einstellung diskriminierender Praktiken und ihrer Folgen gegenüber der palästinensischen Bevölkerung abhängig gemacht werden solle[107].

25.02.2007:

In einem Interview mit der in London erscheinenden saudischen Zeitung verlangt der Leiter des Politischen Büros von „Hamas“ in Damaskus, Khaled Meshal, die israelische Anerkennung palästinensischer Rechte und den Rückzug aus der Westbank und dem Gazastreifen als Voraussetzungen für eine Friedensregelung und betont, dass die palästinensische Politik unabhängig von Israel Entscheidungen treffe[108].

23.02.2007:

Nach der Begegnung mit Bundesaußenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier am Vortag in Berlin begrüßt Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel im Gespräch mit Präsident Machmud Abbas die Vereinbarung zwischen „Fatah“ und „Hamas“ in Mekka zur Bildung einer Regierung der nationalen Einheit, weil sie das Blutvergießen im Gazastreifen beenden könne. Gleichzeitig erinnert Merkel aber auch

an die drei Voraussetzungen für die Wiederaufnahme der internationalen Hilfe für die Palästinenser. Während Merkel auf die Freilassung des israelischen Gefreiten Gilad Shalit drängt, der am 25. Juni 2006 entführt wurde, verlangt Abbas die Entlassung von rund zehntausend palästinensischen Gefangenen aus israelischen Gefängnissen und Lagern. Politische Fortschritte sind aus dem Gespräch zwischen Merkel und Abbas nicht erkennbar. Der Sprecher für internationale Beziehungen und Obmann der Fraktion DIE LINKE im Bundestag, Wolfgang Gehrcke, vermutet, dass die Ergebnislosigkeit des Treffens auf den „engen deutschen Schulterschluss mit der israelisch-amerikanischen Position“ zurückzuführen sei. Damit sei erneut „eine weitere Chance vertan, Europa als ernsthaften und ehrlichen Makler“ zu etablieren.

Jordaniens König Abdullah II. fordert die israelische Regierung in einem Interview mit dem israelischen Fernsehen auf, mit den Palästinensern und den arabischen Staaten Verhandlungen auf der Grundlage der Beiruter Erklärung der Arabischen Liga vom März 2002 aufzunehmen. Ohne eine Klärung des israelisch-palästinensischen Verhältnisses werde es keine Lösung der arabisch-israelischen Beziehungen geben. Ohne ein Ende des israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikts werde der Funke der Gewalt auf die gesamte arabisch-moslemische Welt überspringen.

Nach einer Meldung der Deutschen Presseagentur aus Kairo, die von der „Frankfurter Rundschau“ übernommen wird, haben 150 saudische Sunniten und Schiiten am 22.Februar einen Brief veröffentlicht, in dem sie umfassende politische Reformen anmahnen, um die Auseinandersetzungen zwischen beiden islamischen Glaubensrichtungen einzudämmen. An ihnen seien vor allem die USA und Israel schuld, weil sie die regionalen Konfliktparteien unterstützten, um die arabischen Gesellschaften zu zerstören: „Die zionistisch-amerikanische Koalition ist der einzige Nutznießer von Bürgerkriegen in der Region“, heißt es in dem Brief nach bekannter verschwörungstheoretischer Manier.

Der Londoner „Guardian“ berichtet vorab aus dem Bericht des südafrikanischen Rechtsprofessors John Dugard im Auftrag der Vereinten Nationen, wonach „Israels Rechtspraxis und sein Handeln in den palästinensischen Gebieten mit Sicherheit Aspekte der Apartheid widerspiegelt“. Dugard weist in dem Bericht, der das Datum vom 29. Januar trägt und im März dem UN-Rechtausschuss vorgelegt werden soll, die israelische Behauptung zurück, dass die Trennungsmauer allein der Sicherheit diene: „Es ist vollkommen klar, dass die Mauer und die Kontrollpunkte vor allem darauf abzielen, der Sicherheit, dem Wohlbefinden und der Behaglichkeit der Siedler zu dienen.“ Am 22. Februar berichtet die von Ramallah aus arbeitende palästinensische Menschenrechtsorganisation „Al-Haq (Das Recht)“ von der unbegründeten Verweigerung der Ausreiserechte aus der Westbank nach Jordanien, Ägypten und Spanien für ihren Generalsekretär Shawan Jabarin durch israelische Behörden[109].

22.02.2007:

Israels Oberstes Gericht gibt den Bewohnern der Siedlungen Avnei Hefetz und Einav in der Westbank Recht, für die das israelische Militär Sicherheitszäune um ihre Siedlungen errichten soll, auch wenn diese palästinensisches Ackerland durchschneiden.

21.02.2007:

Nach einem Bericht von „Haaretz“, der sich auf eine wissenschaftliche Untersuchung stützt, sind 43 Prozent der Bevölkerung im arabischen Ost-Jerusalem Araber und 43 Prozent Juden – 184.300 Personen. Zwischen 1967 und 2005 sei in den Stadtgrenzen Jerusalems die arabische Bevölkerung von 68.600 auf 244.800 gestiegen, die jüdische Bevölkerung von 197.700 auf 475.000. Die größten jüdischen Neubauviertel seien Pisgat Zeev (rund 41.000), Ramat (40.000), Gilo (27.000), Neve Yaacov (20.000), Ramat Shlomo (14.000) und Ost-Talpiot (12.000).

US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice informiert die Mitglieder des Nahost-Quartetts in Berlin über die Ergebnisse ihrer Reise in den Nahen Osten. An dem Treffen nehmen außer dem deutschen Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, sein russischer Kollege Sergej W. Lawrow, UN-Generalsekretär Ban Ki-Moon sowie der EU-Außenbeauftragte Javier Solana und die EU-Kommissarin für auswärtige Angelegenheiten Benita Ferrero-Waldner teil. In einer vorab verteilten Presseerklärung vertritt Steinmeier die Auffassung, dass das Nahost-Quartett zu einem intensiven Engagement zurückgefunden habe: „Gerade in diesen Tagen wird erkennbar, wie wichtig es ist, dass die internationale Staatengemeinschaft in der Frage des Nahost-Konflikts mit einer Stimme spricht." Die Gespräche bezeichnet Steinmeier als „ausgesprochen nützlich", obwohl sie über die Wiederholung bekannter Standpunkte nicht hinauszukommen scheinen[110].

Eine libanesische Flugabwehrrakete wird über Süd-Libanon auf israelische Aufklärungsflugzeuge abgeschossen.

20.02.2007:

Der Jahresbericht 2006 von „Peace Now" zählt zweitausend Siedler in 102 Außenlagern der Westbank. Zwar seien im vergangenen Jahr keine neuen „outposts" entstanden, doch seien manche weiter ausgebaut worden. Nach Angaben des Innenministeriums hätten 2006 in Siedlungen der Westbank 268.000 Juden gelebt.

Yossi Alpher, gemeinsam mit Ghassan Khatib Redakteur des Internet-Portals „bitterlemons" berichtet, dass der saudische König Abdullah Ende [voraussichtlich 28./29.] März die Beiruter Erklärung vom März 2002 – sie wurde im März 2006 auf der Sitzung der Arabischen Liga im sudanesischen Khartum bestätigt – auf die Tagesordnung des Gremiums setzen wolle, um sie zu erweitern und zu konkretisieren. Dieser Friedensplan werde aufgrund seiner

umfassenden Bedeutung als mögliches Instrument gegen Iran und den radikalen Islam eingeschätzt. Wegen der verfehlten US-amerikanischen Politik in der Region sei eine politische Führung Saudi-Arabiens willkommen, schreibt Alpher, und macht auf einige Probleme und Widersprüche im Text und in nachfolgenden arabischen Erklärungen aufmerksam, die sich auf die Regelung des palästinensischen Flüchtlingsproblems, auf den Ausschluss Israels bei der Durchsetzung des Friedensplans und auf den fehlenden Stufenplan beziehen. Israel sollte nach Alphers Auffassung in der ersten Stufe gemeinsam mit der PLO die territorialen und anderen Parameter einer Zweistaatenlösung diskutieren, in der zweiten Phase Geheimgespräche zwecks Einbeziehung Syriens führen und im dritten Schritt öffentlich in den Friedensprozess mit den Palästinensern und Syrien eintreten, der schließlich in Friedensverträge einmünden solle[111].

In einem Einsatz tötet eine israelische Einheit in Zivilkleidung in Djenin den 24jährigen Machmud Abu-Ubayed, der die dortige Gruppe des „Islamischen Djihad“ gelenkt haben soll. Einen Tag zuvor waren in Bat Yam zwei Palästinenser festgenommen worden, die einen Anschlag auf dem Busbahnhof in Tel Aviv geplant haben sollen und bei der Befragung den Namen Abu-Ubayeds angaben. Der „Islamische Djihad“, die den in Makka getroffene Vereinbarung zwischen „Hamas“ und „Fatah“ ablehnen, bekennt sich zu dem geplanten Anschlag.

Der stellvertretende Ministerpräsident Shimon Peres widerspricht nach einem Besuch an der libanesischen Grenze Brigadegeneral Yossi Baidatz, der im Außen- und Sicherheitsausschuss der Knesset Tags zuvor von der wieder gewonnenen militärischen Stärke der „Hisbollah“ gewarnt hatte. Gleichzeitig räumt Peres ein, dass ihr Generalsekretär Hassan Nasrallah die UN-Resolution 1701 durch Waffenschmuggel über die syrische Grenze verletze.

Irans Präsident Machmud Achmadinedjad bietet in einer landesweit ausgestrahlten Rede Verhandlungen über das Urananreicherungsprogramm seines Landes an, wenn die anderen Atommächte „ihre Programme zum nuklearen Brennstoffkreislauf ebenfalls ausschalten“. Der UN-Sicherheitsrat hatte am 12. Dezember 2006 dem Iran in der Resolution 1737 Sanktionen angedroht, wenn es nicht sofort sein Urananreicherungsprogramm abbreche. Der jetzige Versuch, einen mäßigenden Eindruck zu erwecken, dürfte mit einem Brief von 150 Abgeordneten zusammenhängen, die dem Präsidenten eine galoppierende Inflation, hohen Preisauftrieb für Lebensmittel, die hohe Arbeitslosenquote und mangelnde Haushaltskonsolidierung vorwerfen, nachdem im Dezember 2006 seine Anhänger hohe Verluste bei den Kommunalwahlen hinnehmen mussten.

19.02.2007:

Das Dreiertreffen zwischen US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice, Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert und Präsident Machmud Abbas in Jerusalem geht ohne greifbare Ergebnisse zu Ende. Beide Seiten stimmten darin überein, sich unter US-amerikanischer Beteiligung bald wieder zu treffen[112]. Im Interview mit „Haaretz“ lehnt Rice den Vergleich zwischen Iran und Nazi-Deutschland ab[113]. Abbas bezeichnet die Begegnung als dicht und schwierig, aber nicht als Fehler. Danach reist er zu Konsultationen mit König Abdullah II. nach Amman – wo sich auch Rice zu Gesprächen mit Repräsentanten des „Arabischen Quartetts“ aus Saudi-Arabien, den Vereinigten Arabischen Emiraten, Ägypten und Jordanien aufhält –, um von dort aus Deutschland, Großbritannien und Frankreich zu besuchen. Der diplomatische „Haaretz“-Korrespondent Aluf Benn fragt am 22. Februar, warum sich Rice zu regelmäßigen Besuchen in der Region entschlossen habe, wenn sie gewärtig sein müsse, mit leeren Händen und beschädigtem Prestige nach Washington zurückzukehren. Benn vermutet, dass Rice im Gegensatz zu ihren kriegsbegeisterten Kollegen in der US-Administration und bei aller

Widersprüchlichkeit der Politik von George W. Bush im Ende der israelischen Okkupation und der Schaffung eines palästinensischen Staates einen moralischen Imperativ sieht, auch weil sie in den Südstaaten der USA den Rassismus am eigenen Leib kennengelernt habe[114].

Im Vorfeld des Dreiertreffens fordert Condoleezza Rice am 15. Februar beide Seiten zu „Gesprächen über die Gründung eines palästinensischen Staates“ auf. Gleichzeitig äußerte sie die Befürchtung, dass eine neue palästinensische Regierung unter Beteiligung von „Hamas“, die in der Vereinbarung von Mekka die drei Grundvoraussetzungen – Anerkennung Israels, Verzicht auf Gewalt, Bestätigung der von der PLO unterschriebenen Vereinbarungen – nicht erfüllt habe, die Dinge komplizieren könne. Gleichzeitig lobt Rice mehrfach Machmud Abbas, der „sein ganzes Leben der Gewaltlosigkeit gewidmet“ habe. Es wäre ein schwerer Fehler, mit ihm nicht weiter zu sprechen[115]. Der diplomatische „Haaretz“-Korrespondent Aluf Benn zitiert zusätzlich am 19. Februar in „Haaretz“ Rice mit den Worten, dass beide Seiten – Israel und die Palästinenser – ihr Recht auf Existenz gegenseitig anerkennen müssen[116]. Die israelische Regierung ließ erkennen, dass sie zwar über einen „politischen Horizont“ reden, aber die zentralen Konfliktthemen aussparen wolle. Nach dem Treffen zwischen Rice und Abbas am 18. Februar berichtete Yasser Abed Rabbo, engster Berater des palästinensischen Präsidenten, dass die Vereinbarung von Mekka nicht US-amerikanischen Bedingungen entspreche, dass Washington jedoch warten werde, bis das palästinensische Regierungsprogramm vorliege. Abbas entschuldigte sich gegenüber Rice mit der Bemerkung, die Vereinbarung von Mekka sei die beste, die er habe erreichen können. Am selben Tag erblickt Zvi Bar’el in „Haaretz“ in der Politik Washingtons im Nahen Osten alle Leichtigkeit dieser Erde: Sie beharre auf der „Road Map“ und sehe sich ihr nicht verpflichtet; sie wünsche Demokratie, könne aber ihre Ergebnisse von sich weisen; sie sei gegen die Siedlungen – ganz zu schweigen von ihren Außenlagern –, aber habe sie schon als Fait accompli

akzeptiert; sie spreche sich für einen Endstatus-Vertrag aus, doch bevor er erreicht sei, definiere sie seine Voraussetzungen. „Mit einem Wort: Die Lösung des Konflikts ist nicht wesentlich, sie ist ein Luxus. … Der Konflikt, der Condoleezza Rice in die Region bringt, gleicht dem ›Truthahn-Prinzip‹, das davon ausgeht, dass du Flügel hast, aber nicht fliegen kannst, stattdessen aber frei bist, Lärm zu verbreiten. “ Des weiteren äußert sich Bar'el höchst kritisch zur „Road Map“, der er Uneindeutigkeit, mangelnde Fokussierung und fast Impressionismus vorhält. Deshalb brauche der Konflikt ein neues Arbeitspapier, zu dem jedoch Washington unfähig sei, weil der Konflikt – im Gegensatz zu Nordkorea, Libyen, Iran und Irak – für die USA keine strategische Bedrohung darstelle[117].

18.02.2007:

In einem gemeinsamen Kommuniqué fordern der iranische Präsident Machmud Achmadinedjad und Syriens Staatspräsident Bashar Assad in Teheran den Rückzug der USA aus dem Irak und die Schaffung einer atomwaffenfreien Zone in der Region. Gleichzeitig weisen sie das Verbot der friedlichen Nutzung der Atomenergie als inakzeptabel zurück und begrüßen die Verständigung zwischen „Fatah“ und „Hamas“ im saudischen Mekka.

17.02.2007:

Nach ihrer Begegnung treten Außenministerin Tsipi Livni und ihre US-amerikanische Kollegin Condoleezza Rice in Jerusalem gemeinsam vor die Presse. Darin betont Livni, dass die Vereinbarung von Mekka zwischen „Fatah“ und „Hamas“ nach Auffassung ihrer Regierung nicht den Voraussetzungen für Verhandlungen entspreche. Rice stimmt ihr prinzipiell zu, betont jedoch, dass Washington die Bildung der neuen palästinensischen Regierung abwarten wolle, bevor ein endgültiges Urteil sinnvoll sei. Außerdem – so warnt sie die israelische Regierung – könne man

nicht ewig auf einen günstigen Zeitraum für Verhandlungen warten[118].

Im Gastbeitrag „Fremde Federn“ in der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung“ weist der frühere Botschafter Israels in Deutschland, Avi Primor, darauf hin, dass mindestens zwei Drittel der israelischen Bevölkerung, wolle man Meinungsumfragen Glauben schenken, „solide hinter den Prinzipien der verschiedenen bislang entworfenen Friedenspläne stehen. Alle Friedenspläne – der [„Parameter“] Clintons vom Dezember 2000, der [Rede] Bushs vom Sommer 2003, die **Genfer Vereinbarung** vom Dezember 2003, der Fahrplan [„Road Map“] des Quartetts oder die erwähnte Rede Olmerts [27. November 2006][119] – haben die gleichen Komponenten: Sie sprechen von der Räumung fast aller von Israel besetzten Gebiete einschließlich der Siedlungen und von der Entstehung eines überlebensfähigen, unabhängigen Palästinenserstaates.“ Dass aus den Friedensplänen bislang keine politischen Konsequenzen gezogen worden sind, begründet Primor mit der Schwäche der israelischen und palästinensischen Regierung, „um Initiativen zu ergreifen, an die sie selbst glauben und von denen sie wissen, dass die eigene Bevölkerung diese unterstützen würde. Doch meist schweigt die Mehrheit, weshalb militante Minderheiten den Ton angeben und die Regierungen einschüchtern. Unter solchen Umständen kann internationaler Druck der einzige Ausweg sein.“ Die Europäische Union mit der „für alle Seiten glaubwürdige[n deutschen] Präsidentschaft“ sei „die einzige Macht; die imstande wäre, nicht nur einen Friedensprozess zu initiieren, sondern auch die anderen Partner des Nahost-Quartetts (Amerika, Russland und die UN) davon zu überzeugen, ihre Initiative zu unterstützen, wenn nicht gar hinzunehmen. Die Vereinigten Staaten sind zwar die bei weitem einflussreichste Macht im Nahen Osten, es fehlt ihnen aber der Wille, eine Initiative durchzusetzen.“ Abschließend fragt Primor nach dem Mut der EU zu einer Führungsrolle hat.

„Haaretz“ berichtet, dass die Mitgliederversammlung des ältesten Kibbuz, des 1910 gegründeten Degania A im Südwesten des Sees Genezareth, einen Antrag auf Privatisierung gebilligt hat. Damit würden 85 Prozent des restlichen Gemeineigentums verkauft werden. Bereits jetzt werden unterschiedlich hohe Gehälter an die Mitglieder gezahlt, auch Wohnungen und anderes Eigentum sind an sie verteilt worden.

16.02.2007:

In der Wochenendbeilage von „Haaretz“ wendet sich der Tel Aviver der führende Verfassungsrechtler Amnon Rubinstein, der in der Vergangenheit verschiedene Ministerämter innehatte, unter der Überschrift „Was ist mit mir geschehen? Was ist mit euch geschehen?“ gegen die Einrichtung eines Verfassungsgerichtshofs, weil das Oberste Gericht dessen Aufgaben wahrnehmen könne, wenn dort Rechtsanwälte statt Angehörige aus dem Büro des Generalstaatsanwalts und der Anklagebehörde sitzen würden. Außerdem gehöre ein arabischer Muslim oder Druse dazu. Dem früheren Präsidenten des Obersten Gerichts Aharon Barak bescheinigt Rubinstein zwar, einer der besten Juristen der Welt, doch in vielen Fällen einem extremen Aktivismus verfallen zu sein. Das Gericht solle sich nicht in Sicherheitsangelegenheiten einmischen, gleiches gelte prinzipiell für Interventionen in Gesetzgebungskompetenzen der Knesset. In den vergangenen Jahren sei ein Prozess eingerissen, der die Politik beschädige und das Justizsystem zu einem Diktator habe aufsteigen lassen. Rubinstein verwahrt sich gegen den Vorwurf, dass er politisch nach rechts gewandert sei. Richtig sei, dass die Linke ihre Position verändert habe. Er habe dies bemerkt, als er den Text der **„Genfer Initiative“** gelesen habe: Er habe „Meretz/Yachad“ verlassen, weil er den Kompromiss in Sachen „palästinensische Flüchtlinge“ und das Angebot nicht akzeptabel finde, die arabischen Staaten für die sechzig Jahre lange Aufnahme der Flüchtlinge zu entschädigen, obwohl diese als Geiseln gehalten und zum Hass auf Israel und

dessen Zerstörung erzogen worden seien. Mit diesem Angebot seien seine früheren Parteifreunde „aus den Gleisen gekippt“. In den israelischen Universitäten habe eine kleine Minderheit von Antizionisten die Kontrolle über einige Human- und Sozialwissenschaften übernommen, wobei der Diskurs „Meretz/Yachad“ links überholt habe. Gleichwohl stimme er mit der Linken überein, dass es zwei Staaten für die beiden Völker geben, dass auf die Siedlungen verzichtet und der Konflikt mit den Palästinensern möglichst umgehend beendet werden müsse. Unterschiedlich beurteile er allerdings die Frage nach der Stärke Israels: Für ihn sei Israel trotz seiner Militärmacht schwach, verwundbar und an einem Faden hängend, weil es von Kräften umringt sei, die seine Existenz nicht akzeptieren würden. Die Lage erinnere ihn an 1938/39: Der Westen sehe die Gefahren, tue aber nichts. Der Antisemitismus sei als starke und dämonische Kraft zurückgekehrt[120]. Zwischen der Präsidentin des Obersten Gerichts, Dorit Beinisch, und dem neuen Justizminister Daniel Friedmann bahnt sich ein Konflikt an, als Beinisch sich in einem Beitrag am 15. März dafür ausspricht, das Gericht aus der Abhängigkeit des Justizministerium zu lösen, und dagegen Einspruch erhebt, dem Gericht die Befugnis der Kontrolle von parlamentarischen Entscheidzungen zu nehmen und Veränderungen bei der Ernennung von Mitgliedern des Gerichts zuzustimmen[121].

15.02.2007:

Nach der Verständigung zwischen „Fatah“ und „Hamas“ in Mekka tritt die palästinensische Regierung unter Ismail Haniyeh zurück. Haniyeh wird von Präsident Machmud Abbas mit der Bildung des neuen Kabinetts beauftragt. Dafür hat er gemäß dem Grundgesetz fünf Wochen Zeit.

14.02.2007:

Das israelische Büro der **„Genfer Initiative“** lädt Diplomaten und Vertreter internationaler Organisationen zu einer Konferenz unter dem Titel „The Palestinian Unity Government; The Arab League Initiative and Israel – Is There a Partner?“ nach Tel Aviv ein. Zu den Rednern gehören der Leiter der Delegation der Europäischen Union in Israel, Botschafter Ramiro Cibrian-Uzal, der Generaldirektor des Büros der „Genfer Initiative“ Gadi Baltiansky sowie Bauminister Meir Sheetrit („Kadima“), die Abgeordnete Colette Avital (Arbeitspartei), die zu den Erstunterzeichnern der „Genfer Initiative“ gehört, der Vorsitzende von „Meretz/Yachad“, Yossi Beilin, und der ehemalige palästinensische Minister Qadura Faris, ebenfalls Erstunterzeichner der „Genfer Initiative“. Der Leiter des Tel Aviver Büros der Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Jörn Böhme, stellt uns freundlicherweise seine Eindrücke von der Tagung zur Verfügung[122].

In der iranischen Provinz Sistan-Balutschistan werden bei zwei Anschlägen elf Menschen getötet. Zu den Terrorakten bekennt sich die Gruppe „Soldaten Gottes“.

13.02.2007:

Der deutsche UN-Botschafter Thomas Matussek kritisiert als derzeitiger EU-Ratsvertreter im US-Sicherheitsrat die israelische Siedlungspolitik und den Bau der Trennungsmauern als „tief beunruhigend“. Damit würde die Zweistaatenlösung gefährdet, erklärt Matussek.

Am Vorabend des zweiten Jahrestages der Ermordung des früheren libanesischen Ministerpräsidenten Rafik Hariri werden bei zwei Attentaten auf Busse in einem nordöstlich von Beirut gelegenen Ort drei Menschen ermordet. Am 14. Februar gedenken viele zehntausend Libanesen in Beirut der Ermordung Hariris. Gleichzeitig setzen die Anhänger der „Hisbollah“ ihre seit dem 1. Dezember 2006 andauernde Belagerung des Regierungsgebäudes fort.

12.02.2007:

Im Interview mit der „Süddeutschen Zeitung“ weist der iranische Chefunterhändler für Atomfragen, Ali Laridjani, Vermutungen zurück, sein Land strebe Atomwaffen an. In der iranischen Verteidigungsstrategie sei „kein Platz für Atomwaffen. Aus islamischer Sicht sind sie unzulässig.“ Würde Iran über Atomwaffen verfügen, würde ein Wettrüsten in der Region einsetzen. „Deshalb wünschen wir nur friedliche Atomtechnologie, und wir sind bereit, alle erdenklichen Garantien dafür zu geben, dass wir damit keine Waffen entwickeln.“ Seinem Land gehe es um die Technik der Anreicherung von Uran als Brennstoff für Atommeiler. Bei der Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz, an der Laridjani Tags zuvor teilnimmt, weicht er kritischen Nachfragen zur iranischen Leugnung der Shoah und zum Verhältnis zu Israel aus.

11.02.2007:

Die Chefin des Büros von Ministerpräsidentin Ehud Olmert, Shula Zaken, wird wegen Korruptionsverdacht für sechs Monate von ihren Aufgaben suspendiert. Ihr und dem Chef der Steuerbehörde Jacky Matza – er tritt am 19. Februar zurück – wird vorgeworfen, durch die Verschaffung steuerlicher Erleichterungen für Freunde und Verwandte Schmiergelder kassiert zu haben. Ebenfalls am 19. Februar muss Israels Polizeichef Moshe Karadi zurücktreten, dem schwere Versäumnisse bei der Untersuchung eines Mordfalles vorgeworfen werden, bei dem 1999 ein Polizist im Auftrag einer Mafia-Familie ein anderes Mitglied der Unterwelt getötet hatte. Karadis Nachfolger Yaacov Granot, bisheriger Leiter der Gefängnisbehörde, war 2004 von der Anklage der Korruption, des Machtmissbrauchs und des Betrugs aus Mangel an Beweisen freigesprochen worden, gleichwohl erhebt Generalstaatsanwalt Menachem Mazouz gegen die Berufung Einspruch, weil die Vorwürfe nicht restlos aufgeklärt seien. Die Justiz soll Medienberichten zufolge

auch gegen Finanzminister Avraham Hirchson („Kadima“) wegen des Verdachts der Korruption ermitteln.

09.02.2007:

Im Beisein des saudischen Königs Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz einigen sich nach dreitägigen Verhandlungen die Delegationen von „Hamas“ unter Führung von Khaled Meshal und „Fatah“ unter Leitung von Machmud Abbas in Mekka auf die künftige Zusammenarbeit und die Bildung einer gemeinsam getragenen Regierung[123]. Die Regierung in Riyadh stellt eine Milliarde US-Dollar in Aussicht. Wesentliche Streitpunkte bleiben im Dokument offen. Nach einem Bericht der palästinensischen Zeitung „Al-Ayyam (Die Tage)“ vom 7. Februar sind drei Punkte zwischen den Delegationen strittig, 1. Was ist mit „Einhaltung“ und „Respekt“ gegenüber der Erklärung der Arabischen Liga von Beirut im März 2002 und gegenüber international gültigen Vereinbarungen gemeint, die die PLO unterschrieben hat? 2. Welcher von beiden Sätzen komme zum Zuge – die Einhaltung von Vereinbarungen und Verpflichtungen aus dem künftigen Regierungsprogramm „in einer Art und Weise, die nicht den Rechten des palästinensischen Volkes widerspricht“, oder „in einer Art und Weise, die die Rechte des palästinensischen Volkes wahrt“? Käme letztere Formulierung zum Zuge, würde sich die Einhaltung erübrigen, wenn die Vorlagen den Rechten des palästinensischen Volkes entgegenstehen. 3. Welche Personalvorschläge präsentiert „Hamas“ für den Posten des politisch unabhängigen Innenministers, der die Zustimmung der internationalen Gemeinschaft findet, damit der politische und wirtschaftliche Boykott aufgehoben werde? Die Bundesregierung bezeichnet die Einigung aus Schritt in die richtige Richtung. Russland fordert die Aufhebung der Sanktionen gegen die Autonomiebehörde. In einer gemeinsamen Erklärung erinnert das Nahost-Quartett an seine drei Forderungen „Gewaltverzicht“, „Anerkennung Israels“ und „Akzeptanz früherer Vereinbarungen und Verpflichtungen“[124]. Israels Außenministerin Tsipi Livni schließt sich

diesem Votum in ihrem Vortrag bei der Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz am 09. Februar mit dem Urteil an, dass die drei Prinzipien nicht verhandelbar seien. Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert hält sich mit einer Bewertung zunächst zurück. Oppositionsführer Benjamin Netanyahu beschuldigt Abbas, sich in Richtung „Hamas“ bewegt zu haben. Der Vorsitzende von „Meretz/Yachad“, Yossi Beilin, schließt nach einem Bericht von „Yediot Achronot“ einseitige Schritte Israels und sogar eine militärische Operation nicht aus, wenn es keinen palästinensischen Partner gebe. Bei einem Treffen mit Repräsentanten von 15 US-amerikanischen jüdischen Organisationen im State Department bekräftigt Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice, dass sie sich nicht mit palästinensischen Ministern treffen werde, die zu „Hamas“ gehören, bezeichnet jedoch Abbas als Verhandlungspartner. Washington werde Israel nicht mit eigenen Vorschlägen bedrängen. Der „Haaretz“-Kommentator erkennt am 11. Februar an, dass „Hamas“ seit ihrer totalen Ablehnung Israels einen langen Weg zurückgelegt habe: Die Vereinbarungen mit der PLO würden honoriert, wenn auch noch nicht akzeptiert, und die Resolution der Arabischen Liga vom März 2002 werde übernommen. Damit könne die Einigung als Zustimmung zu den drei Bedingungen des Nahost-Quartetts interpretiert werden. Jetzt komme es darauf an, dass der Beschluss in eine praktische und maßvolle Plattform für die Regierungsarbeit umgesetzt werde. Die Beiruter Zeitung „The Daily Star“ sieht in dem Dokument den Beginn einer neuen Ära diplomatischer Dynamik unter Führung Saudi-Arabiens und politisch pragmatischer Palästinenser, auch wenn es einem neuen arabisch-israelischen Friedensprozess noch nicht zum Durchbruch verhelfe, weil Israel und die USA mit den Europäern im Schlepptau bislang keine Eröffnungszüge haben erkennen lassen. Wenn das Nahost-Quartett auf den drei Voraussetzungen bestehe, sollte Israel ebenfalls verpflichtet werden, sich an die Regeln zu halten[125]. Nach Pressemeldungen vom 24. Februar will sich nach Ägypten und Saudi-Arabien nun auch Indonesien um eine Vermittlung zwischen den verfeindeten palästinensischen Fraktionen bemühen. Am 25.

Februar weist das israelische Außenministerium die Vereinbarung von Mekka in einer langen Erklärung als politisch unzureichend und widersprüchlich zurück[126].

Erstmals seit dem 14. August 2006 – dem Tag der israelisch-libanesischen Waffenruhe – kommt es an der Grenze zwischen beiden Ländern zu einem Schusswechsel. Dabei sollen fünf libanesische Soldaten verwundet worden sein. Beide Seiten beschuldigen sich gegenseitig. Die Regierung in Beirut kritisiert die Verletzung der Souveränität des Landes. Nach israelischen Armeeangaben sollten zwischen dem Sicherheitszaun und der internationalen Grenze Landminen zur Explosion gebracht werden.

Viele hundert Palästinenser demonstrieren in der Jerusalemer Altstadt gegen die Errichtung einer verbreiterten Rampe zum Mugrabi-Tor von der „Klagemauer“ zum „Haram al-Sharif (Nobles Heiligtum)“, dem „Tempelberg“, durch israelische Archäologen und Bauarbeiter. Bei den Zusammenstößen mit der Polizei werden über dreißig Personen verletzt. In Nazareth demonstrieren rund zehntausend israelische Palästinenser. In Kairo gehen Polizisten mit Schlagstöcken gegen Anhänger der verbotenen Moslembrüder vor. Jordaniens König Abdullah II., der sich als Hüter der heiligen Stätten des Islam in Jerusalem versteht, zeigt sich besorgt. Nach Medienberichten soll kurz vor Renovierungsarbeiten, die mehr als vier Jahre hinausgezögert worden seien, ein enger Mitarbeiter von Verteidigungsminister Amir Peretz das Amt des Ministerpräsidenten gewarnt haben, dass der Vorgang bei den innerpalästinensischen Versöhnungsgesprächen in Mekka neue Irritationen auslösen könnte. Auf der Kabinettssitzung am 11. Februar bestätigt die israelische Regierung die Fortsetzung der Ausgrabungen und den Bau der neuen Rampe zum Mugrabi-Tor. Nach Zeitungsberichten vom 12. Februar entscheidet Jerusalemer Oberbürgermeister Uri Lupolianski über einen Aufschub der Arbeiten, bis die Behörden einen für offene Diskussionen erforderlichen Gesamtplan vorgelegt haben[127]. Am 16. Februar kommt es in Ost-Jerusalem zwischen

palästinensischen Jugendlichen und der israelischen Polizei zu Straßenschlachten. Der Führer der islamischen Bewegung im Norden Israels, Sheikh Raed Salah, ruft zu einer dritten „Intifada“ auf. In einem Kommentar bezichtigt Uzi Benziman am 18. Februar in „Haaretz“ Salah, durch Aufhetzung zu einer gezielten bewaffneten Revolte gegen den Staat arbeiten zu wollen und sich durch die Verbindung von nationalen und religiösen Gefühlen als zum fundamentalistischen Islam zugehörig zu bekennen. Gleichzeitig bezeichnet Benziman die Behandlung der arabischen Staatsbürger Israels als schamlos, so dass das Land jetzt diese bitteren Früchte der „eklatanten Diskriminierung“ vorgesetzt bekomme. Staat und Gesellschaft müssten damit aufhören, den palästinensischen Bevölkerungsteil gesetzgeberisch und finanzpolitisch als fünfte Kolonne zu behandeln[128]. Deutsche Zeitungen berichten am 20. Februar, dass bei früheren Ausgrabungen israelische Archäologen auf die Überreste einer Moschee aus der Epoche Sultan Saladins im 11. Jahrhundert gestoßen seien, diese Erkenntnis jedoch drei oder gar vier Jahre lang geheimgehalten hätten, weil sie islamische Ansprüche auf das Gelände befürchteten. Der Archäologe und Jerusalem-Experte Yehuda Ben Meir wirft in einem Gastbeitrag für „Haaretz“ den Behörden unverantwortliches Verhalten gegenüber muslimischen Gefühlen vor. Die Grabungen fügten sich in eine breitere Kampagne mit dem Ziel der souveränen Kontrolle Jerusalems ein[129].

07.02.2007:

Das israelische Kabinett beschließt die Ernennung des 71jährigen emeritierten Zivilrechtlers Professor Daniel Friedman (Universität Tel Aviv) zum neuen Justizminister. Nach dem erzwungenen Rücktritt von Haim Ramon hat Außenministerin Tsipi Livni die Geschäfte kommissarisch geführt. Friedmann ist ein Kritiker der Unabhängigkeit des Obersten Gerichts und wirft ihm vor, den Aktionsradius der Regierung zu stark einzuschränken. Ari Shavit kommentiert in

„Haaretz“, mit der Ernennung werde erneut der Beweis geführt, in welchen Abgrund Politiker das Land sinken ließen.

06.02.2007:

Das israelische Außenministerium verwahrt sich gegen die Einmischung in innere Angelegenheiten durch die Finanzierung der israelischen Gruppe „Planer für Planungsrecht“ durch die britische Regierung. Die Gruppe hat vor kurzem einen Bericht über die Auswirkungen der Trennungsmauern in Jerusalem auf die nunmehr in Enklaven eingeschlossene palästinensische Bevölkerung untersucht. Das Foreign Office in London weist die israelische Kritik als unbegründet zurück.

Nach einem Bericht der israelischen Zeitung „Maariv“ zeigt sich US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice an der **„Genfer Initiative“** interessiert. Außenministerin Tsipi Livni sei nur in der palästinensischen Flüchtlingsfrage abweichender Auffassung[130].

In einem Porträt des früheren Generalsekretärs im israelischen Auswärtigen Amt, Alon Liel, der über drei Jahre mit Hilfe des Schweizer Diplomaten Nicolas Lang mit dem amerikanisch-syrischen Geschäftsmann Ibrahim Suleiman Optionen für eine Verhandlungslösung zwischen Israel und Syrien ausgelotet hat, zitiert der Israel-Korrespondent der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung“ Jörg Bremer die Beteuerung Liels, dass anders als bei den Gesprächen zur Vorbereitung der **„Genfer Initiative“** stets israelische Beamte dabei gewesen seien. Das erkläre, so Bremer, warum sich das israelische Außenministerium mit Kritik an Liels Bemühungen zurückhalte, während Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert das Papier vom Tisch gewischt habe[131]. In einem Beitrag für das Internet-Portal „bitterlemons“ vom 22.Februar detailliert Liel noch einmal seine politischen Vorstellungen zum Ausgleich zwischen Israel und Syrien[132].

In seiner verhaltenen Rezension der politischen Biographie Ariel Sharons von Gadi Blum und Nir Hefez referiert der Israel-Korrespondent der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung“ Jörg Bremer die Motive des damaligen Ministerpräsidenten, im Sommer 2006 den Rückzug aus dem Gazastreifen durchzusetzen: „Die Autoren beschreiben, wie Scharon nicht zufällig genau zwei Wochen nach der Bekanntgabe der **›Genfer Initiative‹** [im Oktober 2003] seinen Abkoppelungsplan verkündete. Die ›Initiative‹ füllte ein politisches Vakuum, das dadurch entstanden war, dass Scharon allein militärisch und bis zum Verbluten der palästinensischen Seite und zur Geiselhaft von PLO-Chef Yasser Arafat auf diese ›2. Intifada‹ antwortete. Die Initiative verursachte beträchtlichen Wirbel, der auch bei der Trauerdemonstration im November 2003 für Rabin auf dem Rabin-Platz in Tel Aviv sichtbar wurde. Präsident Bush drohte, die Kredite zu kürzen, wenn weiter in den Siedlungen gebaut würde. Scharon habe von allen Seiten Druck bekommen, heißt es dann [bei Blum und Hefez]. Er ›hatte das Gefühl, dass sich die Schlinge um seinen Hals zusammenzog‹[133].“

Erstmals seit 2001 überstellen die ägyptischen Behörden vierzig Moslembrüder dem Militärtribunal zur Aburteilung. Ihnen wird Geldwäsche und die Bildung einer Miliz vorgeworfen. Gegen die Urteile kann keine Berufung eingelegt werden. Dem seit November 2006 inhaftierten Journalisten Abdul Kareem Nabil Suleiman droht eine elfjährige Haftstrafe wegen der Aufhetzung zum Hass gegen den Islam. Ägyptens „Nationaler Menschenrechtsrat“ verlangt in seinem dritten Jahresbericht die Abschaffung der Notstandsgesetze, die Überarbeitung der Strafgesetze und die Verbesserung der Haftbedingungen in den Gefängnissen. Der Rat hat im Jahr 2006 nach eigenen Angaben 5826 Beschwerden von Bürgern wegen willkürlicher Verhaftungen und wegen Folterung erhalten.

05.02.2007:

Israels Umweltminister Gideon Ezra (Arbeitspartei), der früher stellvertretender Direktor des Inlandsgeheimdienstes „Shin Bet“ war, plädiert für die Freilassung des im israelischen Gefängnis einsitzenden „Fatah“-Führers Marwan Barghouti.

Danny Rubinstein berichtet in „Haaretz“, dass Marwan Barghouti angesichts der innerpalästinensischen Auseinandersetzungen den zu den Erstunterzeichnern der **„Genfer Initiative“** gehörigen Qadura Faris nach Damaskus geschickt habe, um mit dem Leiter des Politischen Büros von „Hamas“ Khaled Meshal Einvernehmen über die ausstehende Regierung der nationalen Einheit zu erzielen. Faris sei mit einer Erklärung Meshals zurückgekehrt, in der die nationale Einheit der Palästinenser beschworen und Ministerpräsident Ismail Haniyeh aufgefordert werde, die Resolution der Arabischen Liga vom März 2002, internationale Beschlüsse und die Vereinbarungen zu respektieren, die von der PLO unterschrieben worden sind. Gleichwohl zeigt sich Rubinstein skeptisch, ob sich „Hamas“ als religiöse Bewegung ändern könne, nachdem es auch der Regierung in Kairo nicht gelungen sei, sie zur Mäßigung aufzufordern. Deshalb, so Rubinsteins Schlussfolgerung, müsse „Hamas“ isoliert werden. Dies könne allerdings nicht mit Gewalt geschehen, denn je stärker Israel, die USA und der Rest der Welt Präsident Machmud Abbas mit Geld und Waffen helfen, um „Hamas“ zu besiegen, desto mehr werde sie von der palästinensischen Öffentlichkeit unterstützt. Den Ausweg bildeten allein dramatisch-politische Fortschritte[134].

Die von Saudi-Arabien zu einem Versöhnungsgespräch eingeladenen palästinensischen Delegationen reisen nach Mekka ab. Zu ihr gehören von Seiten der „Hamas“ Ministerpräsident Ismail Haniyeh, Außenminister Mohammed Zahhar, der Leiter des Politischen Büros in Damaskus Khaled Meshal und sein Stellvertreter Mussa Abu Marzuq. Zur „Fatah“-Delegation gehören Präsident Machmud Abbas, Chefunterhändler Saeb Erakat, Abbas’ Medienberater Nabil Amr, der im Gazastreifen agierende Sicherheitschef Mohammed Dachlan und der Fraktionsvorsitzende

im Parlament, Azzam Abu Achmad. Die palästinensische Nachrichtenagentur „Ma'an" berichtet von unterschiedlichen Erwartungen beider Teams[135].

Nach einem Bericht des Londoner „Guardian" plant eine Gruppe britischer Juden, darunter der Schriftsteller Harold Pinter und der Historiker Eric Hobsbawm, unter dem Namen „Independent Jewish Voices" die Vorlage eines Offenen Briefes, in dem für eine offenere Debatte über den Nahen Osten innerhalb der jüdischen Gemeinschaft des Landes plädiert wird. Ihre Führungen würden die Politik einer Okkupationsmacht über die Menschenrechte des okkupierten Volkes stellen. Wie der „Guardian" weiter berichtet, ist im „Jewish Chronicle" über den politischen Kurs der jüdischen Organisationen in den Leserbriefspalten ein heftiger Streit entbrannt. Tony Judt, Direktor des „Remarque Institute" an der Universität New York, äußert die Befürchtung, dass die Vermischung von Antizionismus und Antisemitismus nur noch als eine politische Verteidigung der israelischen Politik verstanden würden[136]. Am 7. Februar setzt sich Stanley I. Kutler in der „International Tribune" unter dem Titel „Über jüdische Kritiker Israels" damit auseinander, dass das „American Jewish Committee" einen Beitrag von Professor Alvin Rosenfeld (Indiana University) begrüßt habe, wonach „progressive" Juden mit kritischen Äußerungen gegenüber der israelischen Politik das Recht Israels auf Staatlichkeit in Frage stellen und damit dem Antisemitismus Vorschub leisten würden. Kutler schreibt dazu, wenn der Vorwurf stimme, schließe er einen großen Teil der israelischen Bevölkerung ein, der die Okkupation oder die Bombardierungen in Libanon kritisiere. Die Berichterstattung über den innerjüdischen Streit reißt nicht ab[137].

04.02.2007:

Israels Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert weist das Ansinnen von Verteidigungsminister Amir Peretz als unzeitgemäß zurück, fünf winzige Außenlager von Siedlungen in der Westbank aufzulösen.

Nach Medienberichten müssten solche Unternehmungen mit ihm abgesprochen werden.

Das israelische Kabinett bestätigt auf seiner wöchentlichen Sitzung die Ernennung des 54jährigen Gabi Ashkenasi als 19. Generalstabschef. Ashkenasi tritt die Nachfolge von Dan Halutz an, dem er 2005 unterlegen war[138]. Am 14. Februar wird Ashkenasi in sein Amt eingeführt. Ihm wird zugetraut, dass er sich auf die Vermeidung eines neuerlichen Krieges besonders im Norden konzentrieren wird.

Das jordanische Unterhaus beschließt ein neues Kommunalgesetz, wonach die Bürgermeister und Stadträte künftig gewählt werden, während in Amman die Hälfte der Stadträte auch künftig von der Regierung ernannt werden sollen. Seit 2001 galt ein Gesetz, wonach alle Bürgermeister und die Hälfte der Stadträte ernannt werden. Das neue Gesetz sieht fern eine Frauenquote von zwanzig Prozent und die Herabsetzung des Wahlalters von 19 auf 18 Jahre in den Stadträten vor.

03.02.2007:

„Fatah“ und „Hamas“ nehmen einen den neunten Anlauf, die gewaltsamen Auseinandersetzungen im Gazastreifen zu beenden[139].

Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel beginnt eine viertägige Reise nach Ägypten, Saudi-Arabien, in die Vereinigten Arabischen Emirate und nach Kuwait. Der israelisch-palästinensische Konflikt soll im Mittelpunkt stehen, heißt es in Berliner Regierungskreisen. Es gebe eine „positive Grundstimmung“ für den Neubeginn im Friedensprozess. Nach ihrem Gespräch mit Präsident Hosni Mubarak zeigen sich beide davon überzeugt, dass Versuche fehlschlagen würden, Israelis und Palästinensern eine politische Lösung aufzuzwingen. Vielmehr müssten die Anstöße zum Frieden von innen kommen.

02.02.2007:

Erstmals seit dem 20. September 2006 tritt in Washington auf Einladung von US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice das Nahost-Quartett zusammen. An den Gesprächen nehmen Bundesaußenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier als EU-Ratspräsident, von Seiten der EU-Kommission Javier Solana und Benita Ferrero-Waldner, der russische Außenminister Sergej Lawrow sowie UN-Generalsekretär Ban Ki Moon teil. Die Abschlusserklärung kommt über Formeln nicht hinaus[140]. Ban Ki Moon zeigt sich über den erneuten Ausbruch der Gewalt tief besorgt. Lawrow wiederholt, dass Moskau die internationale Isolierung von „Hamas“ für falsch halte, weil sie keine Probleme löse, und plädiert für die Einbeziehung Syriens in den Friedensprozess, was Rice ablehnt. Rice selbst betont, dass die Palästinenser lange auf einen eigenen Staat gewartet hätten und dass Israel mit einem friedlichen Nachbarn leben wolle. Präsident Machmud Abbas zeigt sich vom Ergebnis des Treffens enttäuscht, weil der Boykott gegen die von „Hamas“ geführte Autonomiebehörde nicht aufgehoben worden sei. In einer Erklärung des in Gaza residierenden palästinensischen Außenministeriums heißt es, dass die Fortsetzung der Ächtung weder Sicherheit noch Stabilität und Ruhe in die Region bringe. Das Communiqué des Quartetts kommt über allgemeine Absichtserklärungen nicht hinaus. Dass es darauf verzichtet, zur israelischen Politik in den palästinensischen Gebieten Stellung zu nehmen, löst bei der israelischen Außenministerin Tsipi Livni Befriedigung aus[141].

Bei Zusammenstößen zwischen rivalisierenden Gruppen werden im Gazastreifen am 2. und 3. Februar 25 Palästinenser getötet, rund 250 Menschen werden verletzt. In Jenin wird ein islamischer Geistlicher entführt. „Fatah“ und „Hamas“ vereinbaren neue Gespräche über eine Waffenruhe. Israelische Soldaten töten „irrtümlich“ zwei Angehörige der palästinensischen Sicherheitskräfte

in Betunia bei Ramallah. Der geplante Schulbeginn nach sechsmonatiger Unterbrechung wird im Gazastreifen abgesagt.

Ziad Asali, Präsident der „American Task Force on Palestine“ – einer US-Organisation aus Mitgliedern vorwiegend palästinensischer Herkunft –, beklagt in einem Vortrag in Washington, D.C., den politischen Stillstand im israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt und ruft dazu auf, diese Herausforderung in Politik zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern unter dem Dach der USA unter Nutzung der Erfahrungen von Taba (Januar 2001), der **„Genfer Initiative“**, der Resolution der arabischen Gipfelkonferenz (März 2002) und der Rede von US-Präsident George W. Bush am 24. Juni 2002 umzusetzen. Die USA seien unverzichtbar, nicht weil sie ein ehrlicher Makler, sondern weil sie die einzige Macht seien, die mit den beiden Parteien und anderen Beteiligten mit dem Ziel von „Guidelines“ und Mechanismen für Partnerschaft und deren Ziele zusammenarbeiten können. Ohne das Ende der Besatzung bestehe die apokalyptische Gefahr endloser Kriege. Von Seiten Machmud Abbas’ brauche es eine Vision für einen verfassungsgerechten säkularen und pluralistischen Staat auf der Grundlage des Respekts für die Rechtsordnung[142].

J.M. Rosenberg zitiert in dem politisch rechtslastigen „Israel Public Forum“ aus der Rede von Benjamin Netanyahu auf der diesjährigen VII. internationalen /Konferenz in Herzliya dessen Worte, dass Israel gut auf die Gefahr einer Militäraktion Iran vorbereitet sei[143].

Kann Politik aus der Geschichte lernen, oder ist sie verdammt, dieselben Fehler zu wiederholen? fragt Joschka Fischer in einem Gastbeitrag für „Haaretz“ im Blick auf George W. Bushs Irak-Strategie. Nachdem der Bericht der „Iraq Study Group“ ignoriert worden sei, seien weitere 21.000 US-Soldaten im Irak und ein weiterer Flugzeugträger im Arabischen Golf stationiert worden – in Erinnerung an die Planung des Irak-Krieges 2003 die Vorbereitung des Feldzuges gegen Iran, der die gesamte Region destabilisieren

und sie in den Abgrund stürzen würde. Doch seien alle politischen Optionen längst nicht ausgeschöpft, bemerkt Fischer, und die jüngsten Kommunalwahlen im Iran verpflichteten mehr denn je zum Einsatz der Diplomatie[144].

01.02.2007:
Nach einer Meldung der „Jerusalem Post“ nehmen palästinensische Sicherheitskräfte sieben iranische Waffenexperten in Gaza-Stadt fest.

Der Dirigent Daniel Barenboim nimmt in Wiesbaden den Hessischen Friedenspreis 2006 entgegen, der ihm für seine Bemühungen um die Aussöhnung zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern verliehen wird. Die Laudatio hält der für den Nahen und Mittleren Osten verantwortliche Redakteur der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung“ Wolfgang Günter Lerch[145].

Der Chefredakteur des Magazins „Focus“, Helmut Markwort, verleiht als einziger Juror den „Ludwig-Börne-Preis“ 2006 an Henryk M. Broder. Der 1933 mit seinen Eltern nach Frankreich geflüchtete Politologe Alfred Grosser kritisiert am 3. Februar in der „taz“ die Entscheidung als Missachtung des Humanismus[146].

Januar 2007

31.01.2007:
In einem Interview mit der „Jerusalem Post“ befürwortet der Minister für strategische Angelegenheiten und stellvertretende Ministerpräsident, Avigdor Lieberman („Unser Haus Israel“), den Anschluss Israels an die Europäische Union innerhalb der nächsten fünf Jahre. Lieberman begründet seine Vorstellungen mit den engen kulturellen, demokratischen, sicherheitspolitischen und

wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen seines Landes zu Europa. Rechtliche Ausnahmebestimmungen könnten es ermöglichen, dass Israel seinen Charakter als jüdischer Staat bewahrt. Der frühere Justizminister Amnon Rubinstein begrüßt Liebermans Vorstoß und fügt hinzu, dass gegebenenfalls einige Aspekte der Einwanderungspolitik geändert werden könnten, während das „Gesetz der Rückkehr“ – das jedem Juden die Einwanderung und die israelische Staatsbürgerschaft garantiert – nicht angetastet werden müsse. Hohe Beamte in Brüssel reagieren zurückhaltend. Der ehemalige Botschafter in Bonn und Berlin, Avi Primor, heute der Direktor der Europa-Abteilung an der Privat-Universität Herzliya, reagiert auf Lieberman mit einem Lachen[147].

Nach israelischen Medienberichten hat Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert auf Druck aus den jüdischen Siedlungen Nili und Naaleh die Verlegung der Trennungsmauer um fünf Kilometer östlich der „Grünen Linie“ bei Modein Illit („Ober-Modein“) gebilligt, wobei rund 20.000 Palästinenser künftig in Enklaven westlich der Mauern leben müssen.

Einer der führenden israelischen Demographen, Sergio DellaPergola von der Hebräischen Universität in Jerusalem, schlägt in einem Beitrag aus Anlass der verwaltungstechnischen Vereinigung der Stadt vor vierzig Jahren vor, einen Teil des arabischen Jerusalem – darunter Beit Hanina und Shuafat – aufzugeben, weil der jüdische Bevölkerungsanteil in den kommenden vierzehn Jahren von gegenwärtig 73,5 auf sechzig Prozent sinken werde. Für die Altstadt und das „Heilige Becken“ – das Gelände bis zum Ölberg – solle ein Vatikan-Modell in Erwägung gezogen werden.

Joel Greenberg verweist in der „Chicago Tribune“ darauf, dass als unbeabsichtigte Folge des Baus der Trennungsmauern rund um Jerusalem Tausende Palästinenser ihre davon betroffenen und geteilten Dörfer verlassen und den palästinensischen Bevölkerungsanteil Jerusalems verstärken. Greenberg zitiert in

diesem Zusammenhang den Jerusalem-Experten der **„Genfer Initiative“** Menachem Klein, der im Gegensatz zu Stimmen aus dem Verteidigungsministerium die Auffassung vertritt, dass weniger die Trennungsmauern als die Entscheidung von „Hamas“, keine Attentate in Israel durchzuführen, für die relative Ruhe in der Stadt und ihrer Umgebung verantwortlich seien[148].

Yossi Alpher behauptet in einem Kommentar für die Beiruter Zeitung „Daily Star“, dass Israel sich nie für George W. Bushs Strategie der Demokratisierung des arabischen Nahen und Mittleren Ostens habe erwärmen können[149].

30.01.2007:
Israelisches Militär zerstört einen Tunnel nördlich des Grenzübergangs Karni, durch den vermutlich Waffen aus dem Gazastreifen nach Israel geschmuggelt werden sollten.

Die renommierte „International Crisis Group“ mit Hauptsitz in Brüssel weist in ihrem jüngsten Bericht aus Kairo auf terroristische Gefahren in Ägypten hin, die besonders von der sozial und wirtschaftlich vernachlässigten Sinai-Halbinsel ausgehen, und wendet sich mit sieben Empfehlungen an die ägyptische Regierung, an die ägyptischen politischen Parteien und an die internationalen Partner des Landes[150].

Die US-amerikanisch-jüdische Zeitung „Forward“ berichtet über heftige Kämpfe im US-Senat zur Bedeutung einer Lösung des israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikts für die Überwindung des Krieges im Irak. Die „Iraq Study Group“ hatte im Dezember 2006 in ihrem Bericht erklärt, dass die USA ihre Ziele im Nahen Osten nicht erreichen könnten, wenn sie sich nicht direkt mit dem arabisch-israelischen Konflikt befassen[151].

In einem vom hauseigenen Fernsehen aufgezeichneten Studiogespräch diskutieren der Vorsitzende des Auswärtigen Ausschusses Ruprecht Polenz (CDU/CSU), sein Stellvertreter Hans-Ulrich Klose (SPD), Jerzy Montag (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen), Wolfgang Gehrcke (Die Linke) und der Vorsitzende der Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung Wolfgang Gerhardt über die Rolle der Europäischen Union im Nahen Osten und die Chancen der deutschen EU-Ratspräsidentschaft. Unter den Beteiligten herrscht insbesondere Einigkeit über die Gültigkeit der „Clinton-Parameter“ vom Dezember 2000[152] und die Absage an die israelische Siedlungspolitik. Gehrcke betonte das Recht der Palästinenser auf einen eigenen Staat an der Seite Israels, während Montag seine Hoffnung auf einen Wechsel in der US-Präsidentschaft Anfang 2009 setzte.

29.01.2007:

Bei dem Anschlag des 21jährigen Palästinensers Mohammed al-Saqsaq aus dem Gazastreifen – dem ersten seit April 2006 in Tel Aviv, als zehn Personen starben – werden bei einer Bäckerei im Industriegebiet des südisraelischen Badeorts Eilat drei Passanten getötet. Ein „Hamas“-Sprecher, die „Al-Aqza-Brigaden“ von „Fatah“ und der „Islamische Djihad“ rechtfertigen den Mordanschlag, bei dem auch der Attentäter ums Leben kommt.

In „Haaretz“ berichtet Akiva Eldar, dass am Abend im Arabisch-Hebräischen Theater in Jaffa die erste Zusammenkunft einer neuen „Nationalen Bewegung für Frieden mit Syrien“ stattfinden soll. Die Einladungen stammten von dem früheren Generalstabschef Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, dem ehemaligen Inlands-Geheimdienstchef Yaacov Peri – er hatte im vergangenen Jahr ein aufsehenerregendes Buch über Folterpraktiken an palästinensischen Gefangenen veröffentlicht – sowie den früheren Generalsekretären im Auswärtigen Amt David Kimche und Alon Liel. Außerdem würden sich Akademiker und Intellektuelle an dem Forum beteiligen. Zu den Erstunterzeichnern

gehören unter anderen der Autor Sami Michael, Professor Yoram Peri, der Geschäftsmann David Sasson, dem ehemaligen Jerusalemer Stadtverordneten Moshe Amirav, Professor Menachem Klein – zum inneren Kreis des israelischen Teams der **„Genfer Initiative“** gehörig – und die Professorin Galia Golan. In ihrer Eingangserklärung verwiesen die Autoren darauf, dass sie lange nicht an die syrische Friedensbereitschaft geglaubt hätten, dass es jedoch sträflich wäre, die versöhnliche Initiative aus Damaskus zu ignorieren, weil sie ein unverantwortliches Spiel mit dem Schicksal des Staates Israel wäre[153]. Am 31. Januar führt das israelische Institut „Independent Media Review & Analysis (IMRA)“ ein Interview mit dem aus Irak stammenden israelischen und in London arbeitenden Sasson über Aufgaben und Ziele der neuen Bewegung[154].

Russland kündigt für die bevorstehenden Gespräche des Nahost-Quartetts in Washington am 2. Februar einen Vorstoß zur Aufhebung des Wirtschaftsboykotts der von „Hamas“ geführten Autonomiebehörde an.

Die „International Herald Tribune“ berichtet, dass der iranische Botschafter in Bagdad Hassan Kazemi Qomi Gespräche über die Vertiefung der wirtschaftlichen und militärischen Zusammenarbeit geführt hat. Teheran sei bereit, beim Wiederaufbau Iraks zu helfen. Außerdem solle bald eine iranische Bank ihre Pforten in Bagdad öffnen. Mit der Realisierung der Planungen würden, so der Bericht von James Glanz, die Spannungen zu den USA wachsen[155].

König Abdullah von Saudi-Arabien verwahrt sich entschieden gegen Berichte, dass das Land eine Allianz mit Iran anstrebe[156].

28.01.2007:

Auf ihrer wöchentlichen Sitzung billigt das israelische Kabinett die Ernennung von Ghaleb Madjadele (Arbeitspartei) als neuen Minister

für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Sport. Würde er durch die Knesset bestätigt, wäre er der erste arabische Minister in der Geschichte des Staates[157]. Madjadele wird am 29. Januar vereidigt. Akiva Eldar weist am 1. Februar in „Haaretz“ auf die Ironie hin, dass nach dem Rücktritt von Ophir Pines-Paz als Zeichen des Protests gegen Lieberman der erste arabische Minister Israels tritt. Madjadele bezeichnet sich in dem Gespräch mit Eldar als „israelischen Araber palästinensischer Abstammung“ und weist die rhetorische Unterstellung als Unsinn zurück, dass er als Wissenschaftsminister über Staatsgeheimnisse verfüge, die ihn zur nationalen Illoyalität verführen könnten. In seinem Ministerium gebe es überhaupt keine Geheimnisse. In der politischen Kulturzeitschrift „Cicero“ äußert sich der katholische Erzbischof von Galiläa Elias Chacour positiv über die Ernennung Madjadeles, forderte aber gleichzeitig die Regierung in Jerusalem auf, ihm politische Kompetenzen, Autorität und Zuständigkeiten zu übertragen. Chacour zeigt sich aus einer historischen Perspektive optimistisch über die Friedenschancen äußert sich positiv zur Rolle der Christen im Heiligen Land[158].

Israelische Medien berichten unter Berufung auf US-amerikanische Quellen, dass das State Department in Washington dem Kongress einen Bericht mit der Untersuchung zuleiten werde, ob Israel aus den USA gelieferte Streubomben im Libanon-Krieg entgegen dem „Arms Control Act“ eingesetzt hat. Das Außenministerium in Jerusalem hatte ihren Einsatz als völkerrechtlich gedeckt bezeichnet[159]. Der israelische Außenamtssprecher Mark Regev erklärt dazu, dass der Einsatz der Streubomben zum Schutz der israelischen Soldaten eingesetzt worden seien. Wegen des Streits befinde sich Israel mit den USA von Anbeginn „im offenen Dialog“, so dass die jetzigen Meldungen aus Washington nicht überraschend kämen.

26.01.2007:

Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert setzt sich öffentlich für die Kandidatur von Shimon Peres für das Amt des Staatspräsidenten als Nachfolger von Moshe Katzav ein. Gleichzeitig befürwortet Olmert statt der bislang üblichen geheimen die offene Abstimmung in der Knesset. Peres hat sich bisher nicht festgelegt. Bekannt ist hingegen das Interesse von dem ehemaligen Parlamentspräsidenten Reuven Rivlin („Likud“), der gegenwärtigen Parlamentspräsidentin Dalia Itzik („Kadima“) sowie der früheren Generalkonsulin in New York und heutigen Abgeordneten Colette Avital (Arbeitspartei), die zu den Erstunterzeichnern der **„Genfer Initiative“** gehört. Der Innenausschuss der Knesset beschließt am 30. Januar, innerhalb der nächsten zwei Wochen die Anhörung zur Amtsenthebung von Katzav abzuschließen. Am selben Tag räumt Katzav den Amtssitz im Jerusalemer Stadtteil Talbiye.

Beim Treffen zwischen Ministerpräsident José Luis Rodrigues Zapatero und Präsident Machmud Abbas in Madrid wird bekanntgegeben, dass Spanien der Autonomiebehörde 17 Millionen Euro als Soforthilfe zur Verfügung stellen will.

Bei Zusammenstößen zwischen „Fatah“- und „Hamas“-Anhängern in Gaza-Stadt und im Norden des Gazastreifens sterben 14 Menschen, in den darauffolgenden Tagen steigt die Zahl der Toten auf über dreißig. Die Verhandlungen um die Bildung einer Regierung der nationalen Einheit werden abgesagt. Danny Rubinstein, für die Berichterstattung über die palästinensischen Politik verantwortlich, zitiert am 29. August in „Haaretz“ den Chefredakteur die der PLO nahestehende Zeitung „Al-Hayyat al-Jedida („Das neue Leben)“ Hafez Barghouti mit den Worten, dass sich ein Jahr nach dem Wahlsieg von „Hamas“ die palästinensische Demokratie in eine blutige Demokratie verwandelt habe, die an die Stelle der „Herrschaft des Volkes“ die „Herrschaft des Blutes“ gesetzt habe. Am 30. Januar kehrt im Gazastreifen eine Waffenruhe ein, obwohl maskierte Attentäter einen hochrangigen Offizier der „Izzadin-Qassam-

Brigaden“ von „Hamas“ umbringen. Am 1. Februar leben die gewaltsamen Auseinandersetzungen mit vier Toten wieder auf.

Der einflussreiche Kommentator der „Washington Post“ David Ignatius, berichtet aus Gesprächen mit US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice, dass diese in einer ungewohnten Offenheit ihre Vorstellungen über neue amerikanische Bemühungen zugunsten einer De-facto-Allianz zwischen Israel und moderaten arabischen Staaten präsentiert habe, um Iran, Syrien, die „Hisbollah“ und „Hamas zu isolieren. Dazu bedürfe es der Ermutigung von Israelis und Palästinensern, Verhandlungen über einen Endstatus zu den Themen Grenzen, Jerusalem und Recht der palästinensischen Flüchtlinge auf Rückkehr in ihre Heimat zu explorieren. Arabische Beobachter, so Ignatius, würden sich zurückhaltend zu den Vorstellungen äußern, weil Saudi-Arabien eine konservative islamische Monarchie sei, die vielerorts in der arabischen Welt als eine Bastion des Status quo betrachtet würde und weil die Förderung der Spannungen zwischen Schiiten und Sunniten nicht aufgehen werde. Dennoch plädiert Ignatius dafür, Rice eine Chance einzuräumen[160].

25.01.2007:

In Paris beginnt die von Präsident Jacques Chirac angekündigte internationale Libanon-Geberkonferenz – zu den Gästen gehören als Nichtregierungsorganisationen die Weltbank und der Internationale Währungsfonds –, um die Schuldenlast der Zedernrepublik von 41 Milliarden US-Dollar nach dem israelischen Libanon-Krieg im Juli/August 2006 zu lindern. Syrien und Iran sind nicht eingeladen. Frankreich sagt dem libanesischen Ministerpräsident Fuad Siniora einen Kredit von 500 Millionen Euro „zu besonders günstigen Konditionen“ zu. Die USA wollen ihre Hilfe auf 770 Millionen US-Dollar verdreifachen. Saudi-Arabien verspricht 1,1 Milliarden US-Dollar, Großbritannien 115 Millionen US-Dollar – außerdem 48 Millionen US-Dollar für die palästinensischen Flüchtlinge in Libanon

–, die Europäische Union 400 Millionen US-Dollar, die Europäische Investitionsbank 960 Millionen US-Dollar und die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 103 Millionen US-Dollar. Die Gesamtsumme der zugesagten Mittel beläuft sich auf 7,6 Milliarden US-Dollar, doch soll sich ihre Auszahlung, die von der Einleitung von Reformen in Libanon abhängig gemacht wird, über mehrere Jahre erstrecken.

Ein Ausschuss der Knesset stimmt der Beurlaubung von Präsident Moshe Katzav zu.

23.01.2007:

Der israelische Generalstaatsanwalt Menachem Mazuz kündigt Anklageerhebung gegen Staatspräsident Moshe Katzav, dessen reguläre Amtszeit im Juli 2007 ausläuft, wegen des Verdachts der Vergewaltigung, der sexuellen Nötigung von vier Frauen, der Behinderung der Justiz, der Unterschlagung sowie der Einschüchterung von Zeugen an. Außenministerin Tsipi Livni fordert in ihrer Eigenschaft als Justizministerin Katzav zum Rücktritt auf. Am Abend des 24. Januar schließt sich Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert der Forderung an. Katzav erklärt am 24. Januar in einem Schreiben an Parlamentspräsidentin Dalia Itzik, dass er seine Amtsgeschäfte vorübergehend ruhen lassen wolle, bis die Vorwürfe gegen ihn entkräftet seien. In der anschließenden emotionsgeladenen Pressekonferenz beschuldigt Katzav die Medien, gegen ihn eine verschwörerische „Lynchkampagne“ inszeniert zu haben, vergleicht die israelische Justiz mit der in totalitären Staaten und löst damit landesweit Schockwellen aus. Zuvor hat die Abgeordnete Zahava Gal-On im Namen von „Meretz/Yachad“ einen Antrag auf Amtsenthebungsverfahren ins Parlament eingebracht. Für die Amtsenthebung ist die Zustimmung von neunzig der hundertzwanzig Abgeordneten nötig. In Pressekommentaren wird die Frage gestellt, ob das Amt des Präsidenten abgeschafft werden solle. Katzavs Vorgänger Ezer Weizman war im Juli 2000 zum vorzeitigen Rücktritt gezwungen worden.

In einem Gastbeitrag für die „Jerusalem Post“ hält Gershon Baskin, gemeinsam mit Hanna Siniora Leiter des „Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI)“ mit Sitz in Jerusalem, der israelischen Regierung vor, keine politische Vision zu haben[161]. Nach dem Rücktritt von Generalstabschef Dan Halutz sei ihr einziges Ziel das politische Überleben. Baskin äußert sich skeptisch zu einem erneuten Besuch von US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice, weil diese sich damit begnügen werde, Ehud Olmert und Machmud Abbas erneut zu empfehlen, die wirklichen Konfliktprobleme anzupacken. Die Administration in Washington werde bis zum Ende der Amtszeit George W. Bushs in zwei Jahren keinen Politikwandel vornehmen[162], erklärt Baskin weiter. Damit sei sie zu einem Friedenshindernis geworden. In einem dramatischen Appell fordert Baskin Olmert auf, sofort das Leben von Hunderttausenden Palästinensern zu erleichtern, und verlangt von Abbas, bei der Bildung einer neuen Regierung Führung zu zeigen, damit Recht und Gesetz besonders im Gazastreifen wiederhergestellt würden und der tägliche „Qassam“-Beschuss auf israelisches Territorium aufhöre. Der beste Weg in einen neuen und echten Friedensprozess sei die Beiruter Erklärung der Arabischen Liga vom März 2002[163]. Am 27. Januar verlangt der Brigadegeneral der Reserve Yossi Ben-Ari, der für Sicherheitsangelegenheiten verantwortlich war, in einem Beitrag für die Zeitung „Yediot Achronot“ ebenfalls das Einschwenken der israelischen Politik auf die Beiruter Erklärung[164].

In der Nacht zum 23. Januar trägt US-Präsident George W. Bush in einer knapp einstündigen Rede seine „State of the Union Address“ beiden Häusern des Kongresses vor. Im außenpolitischen Teil

– kündigt er dramatische Schritte an, um die Abhängigkeit der USA von Ölimporten zu reduzieren,
– sagt Maßnahmen gegen den drohenden Klimawandel zu, die allerdings die einheimische Wirtschaftskraft nicht schwächen dürfe,
– verspricht den physischen Schutz und die Fortsetzung des ideologischen Kampfes gegen terroristische Angriffe besonders

schiitischer und sunnitischer Extremisten, die auch gemäßigte Regierungen bedrohten,
– begrüßt die Vertreibung Syriens aus Libanon,
– verurteilt das Atomwaffenprogramm Irans,
– verteidigt die militärische Verstärkung im Irak und gibt den Krieg dort nicht verloren und beschwört ein „Alptraum-Szenario“ im Falle des Scheiterns und
– kündigt die Fortsetzung der Bemühungen für „die Freiheit“ Cubas, Weißrusslands und Burmas an.

Im Blick auf den israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt begnügt sich Bush mit dem knappen Hinweis, gemeinsam mit den anderen Mitgliedern des Nahost-Quartetts die diplomatischen Bemühungen für den Frieden im Heiligen Land fortzusetzen, damit ein demokratischer palästinensischer Staat an der Seite Israels entstehen kann[165]. Die Demokraten und Teile der Republikaner im Kongress lehnen vor allem die von Bush präsentierte „neue Strategie“ im Irak zum Teil scharf ab. Im Entwurf einer Resolution wird die Entsendung weiterer US-Soldaten verworfen.

Ein „Fatah“-Sprecher präsentiert nach einer Meldung der palästinensischen Nachrichtenagentur „Ma’an“ einen Bericht, in dem „Hamas“ Korruption und die Begünstigung von Anhängern vorgeworfen wird[166].

Nach israelischen Medienberichten bemüht sich die Regierung in Jerusalem, Vollmitglied der NATO zu werden, nicht zuletzt für den Fall einer Konfrontation mit dem Iran. Auch die NATO-Staaten seien an Israel als Mitglied interessiert, heißt es. Repräsentanten des israelischen Verteidigungs- und Außenministeriums würden dazu Richtlinien und Strategien erarbeiten, die Ende Februar Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert vorgelegt werden könnten. Nach Berichten von der Herzliya-Konferenz Ende Januar 2007 warnt der Herausgeber der ZEIT, Josef Joffe, vor einer Mitgliedschaft, weil sie das Schicksal Israels von Entscheidungen der 25 NATO-Mitglieder abhängig machen würde.

In weiten Teilen Libanons legt ein von der Opposition unter Führung der „Hisbollah“ ausgerufener Generalstreik zum Sturz der Regierung Fuad Sinioras das öffentliche Leben weitgehend lahm. Bei Zusammenstößen mit den Sicherheitskräften kommen fünf Personen ums Leben. Am 24. Januar beruhigt sich die Lage. Am 25. Januar kommen bei Unruhen in Beirut erneut drei Personen ums Leben[167].

Robert Satloff, Direktor des „Washington Institute for Near East Policy”, schlägt der Jerusalemer Shoah-Gedenkstätte „Yad Vashem“ den 1997 verstorbenen tunesischen Bauern Khaled Abd al-Wahab als ersten arabischen „Gerechten unter den Völkern“ vor. Abd al-Wahab habe während der deutschen Besatzungszeit eine jüdische Frau gerettet. Zur Begründung fügt Satloff in einem Interview mit „Haaretz“ hinzu, dass mit der Ehrung die „Konspiration des Schweigens“ gebrochen werden solle, die in der arabischen Welt im Blick auf die Rettung von Juden vorherrsche.

22.01.2007:

In einem Vortrag vor dem Auditorium der Siebten Herzliya-Konferenz vertritt der emeritierte Orientalist Bernard Lewis (Princeton University) die Auffassung, dass im Nahen und Mittleren Osten nach dem Ende des Kalten Krieges eine „Veränderung von kosmischer Dimension“ zu verzeichnen sei: das Ende der Dominanz der Weltmächte. Damit würden zum einen die alten Modelle wiederaufleben, denn an die Stelle nationaler oder ethnischer würden erneut religiöse Identitäten treten. Zum anderen würden mit dem Ende der „Phase des Bonapartismus“ die inneren Konflikte mit der Rivalität zwischen Sunniten und Schiiten – in den Worten Lewis’ zwischen „Protestanten“ und „Katholiken“ – an die Oberfläche treten: Während Ägyptens Präsident Anwar Sadat mit Israel aus rationalen Überlegungen Frieden geschlossen habe und der Krieg Israels in Libanon von den sunnitischen Staaten begrüßt und bedauert worden sei, dass die Schiiten nicht besiegt worden seien, halte Präsident

Machmud Achmadinedjad in der zweiten Phase der iranischen Revolution an seiner apokalyptischen Botschaft fest. Dies mache ihn zur Gefahr. Die „Gewissheit der Zerstörung auf Gegenseitigkeit“ sei für ihn nicht abschreckend, sondern sporne ihn an[168].

Im Interview mit „Spiegel“-online vertritt US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice die Auffassung, dass der Krieg im Irak zu gewinnen sei, und spricht sich gegen einen Waffengang gegen Iran aus. Zu Meldungen über informelle Gespräche zwischen Israel und Syrien erklärt Rice, dass die Regierung in Jerusalem keinen Rat aus Washington brauche, um unter den gegenwärtigen Bedingungen der syrischen Beteiligung an destabilisierenden Handlungen in der Region keine Verhandlungen mit Damaskus aufzunehmen.

Nach Beratungen im Kreis der 27 EU-Außenminister in Brüssel wird Außenkommissar Javier Solana beauftragt, die europäischen Bemühungen um eine Wiederaufnahme der Verhandlungen zwischen Israel und den Palästinensern zu verstärken.

21.01.2007:

Nach einer Besichtigungstour durch Teile der Westbank zeigt sich der EU-Außenbeauftragte Javier Solana in der jordanischen Hauptstadt Amman schockiert über die Erweiterung der jüdischen Siedlungen und den Weiterbau der Mauer, die die Schaffung eines Staates Palästina verhindern würden. Bei der Begegnung mit König Abdullah II. fordert dieser die Verstärkung der europäischen Anstrengungen im Friedensprozess.

20.01.2007:

Präsident Machmud Abbas trifft in Damaskus mit Syriens Präsidenten Bashar Assad zusammen. Nach einem ersten vergeblichen Anlauf, weil im Vorfeld eine Einigung über die Zusammensetzung eines neuen palästinensischen Kabinetts nicht

erkennbar gewesen sei, spricht er auf Damaszener Empfehlung am 21. Januar mit dem Leiter des Politischen Büros von „Hamas“ in der syrischen Hauptstadt, Khaled Meshal. Danach bezeichnet Abbas das Gespräch aus fruchtvoll, während Meshal betont, dass der Dialog fortgesetzt werden müsse. Gemäß einem Vier-Punkte-Programm sollen die innerpalästinensischen Auseinandersetzungen beendet, der Dialog zur Bildung einer Regierung der nationalen Einheit fortgesetzt, Schritte zur Aktivierung der PLO unternommen und an den palästinensischen nationalen Zielen einschließlich der Ablehnung von Übergangsregelungen festgehalten werden[169].

19.01.2007:

Die israelische Regierung überweist in der Nacht zum 19. Januar hundert Millionen US-Dollar auf ein Konto im Amt von Machmud Abbas, die aus einbehaltenen Zoll- und Steuereinnahmen stammen[170]; die auf israelischen Konten verbuchten Einnahmen sollen monatlich zwischen fünfzig und sechzig Millionen US-Dollar ausmachen. Nach Medienberichten soll US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice bei ihrem Besuch in Jerusalem Mitte des Monats darauf gedrängt haben, um das Leben der palästinensischen Bevölkerung zu erleichtern.

Im Interview mit „Haaretz” bestätigt der jordanische König Abdullah II. das Interesse seines Landes am Aufbau atomarer Kapazitäten zu friedlichen Zwecken. Er fordert, dem israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt höchste Priorität einzuräumen, weil nach Beendigung des Friedensprozesses die Gegensätze zu anderen Staaten in der Region leichter zu erledigen seien; darauf würde er wetten. Die Sicherheit und die Zukunft Jordaniens gingen mit der Zukunft der Palästinenser und der Israelis Hand in Hand. Ein Fehler hier ziehe Fehler dort nach sich. Die Verhandlungen in Taba im Januar 2001, die **„Genfer Initiative“** und die „Road Map“ bezeichnet er als politisch wegweisend. Man müsse also nicht ans Reißbrett zurück. Es müsse im Interesse Israels liegen, nicht nur zu Jordanien, Syrien

und Ägypten, sondern auch zu Marokko im Westen und zu Oman am Osten gute Beziehungen zu haben. Doch dafür müsse ein Preis bezahlt werden: die Zukunft der Palästinenser. Die Araber sagten: „Wir wollen Frieden, und wir wollen formale Beziehungen." Das Verhältnis seines Vaters König Hussein zu Yitzhak Rabin bezeichnet Abdullah als einzigartig[171].

In einem Beitrag für die „Los Angeles Times" betont der frühere politische Berater von Präsident Bill Clinton, Aaron David Miller[172], dass für die Regierung in Washington die Zeit gekommen sei, ihre Machtinstrumente einzusetzen. Die Lage zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern verlange ernsthafte Aufmerksamkeit. Eine Lösung des Konflikts werde zwar nicht die Krise im Irak bereinigen oder die Bedrohung durch den radikalen Islam beenden, aber die US-amerikanische Glaubwürdigkeit vermehren, die Freunde Amerikas stärken und die Chancen der Gegner mindern, Araber und Muslime gegen die USA zu mobilisieren.

Der frühere Koordinator im Nationalen Sicherheitsrat Israels, Raanan Eliaz, schreibt in einem Gastkommentar für „Haaretz" dass die USA nicht länger allein die Lage im Nahen und Mittleren Osten stabilisieren können und dafür die Europäische Union brauchen. Auch wenn in Washington diese Einsicht noch nicht gefestigt sei, müssten jetzt die Vorarbeiten dafür geleistet werden.

Bundesaußenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier rät vor Journalisten in Berlin von konkurrierenden Plänen der internationalen Staatengemeinschaft für den Nahen Osten ab. Für die Europäer sei es erforderlich, ihre gemeinsame Kraft zu bündeln. Die von der Bundesregierung betriebene „Revitalisierung" des Nahost-Quartetts sei „bei einigen Partnern" früher mit Zögern aufgenommen worden, fügt Steinmeier ohne nähere Erläuterungen hinzu. Inzwischen sei dieses Vorgehen jedoch zum Konsens geworden.

18.01.2007:

Israels Verteidigungsminister Amir Peretz stoppt den Ausbau der Siedlung Maskiot im nördlichen Jordantal. Dort sollten hundert Wohneinheiten für frühere Siedler im Gazastreifen gebaut werden[173]. Dror Etkes, der für „Peace Now“ die Siedlungsszene beobachtet[174], kritisiert, dass die Regierung dem Druck der Siedler oder der internationalen Gemeinschaft nachgebe, statt eine eigene Politik zu formulieren.

Dem „Newsletter“ der israelischen Botschaft in Berlin entnehmen wir zwei Meldungen:

»Die israelische Armee hat gestern (17.01.) mitgeteilt, dass in den vergangenen Tagen 44 Erdwälle in der Umgebung von Dörfern im Westjordanland entfernt wurden. Die Armee hatte im Westjordanland in den letzten Jahren fast 400 Erdwälle und Dauersperren errichtet. Die Entfernung der Erdwälle ist eine weitere Maßnahme zur Erleichterung der Lebensumstände der palästinensischen Zivilbevölkerung, die Israel infolge des Treffens zwischen Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert und dem Vorsitzenden der Palästinensischen Autonomiebehörde Mahmoud Abbas am 24. Dezember verkündet hatte. Zuvor berichtete die Armee über eine Erleichterung bei den Kontrollen von palästinensischen Fahrzeugen an 16 zentralen Sperren im Westjordanland. Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert besuchte gestern Grenzübergänge und Sperren im Westjordanland, um sich von der Umsetzung der Erleichterungen, die er dem Vorsitzenden der Palästinensischen Autonomiebehörde Mahmoud Abbas versprochen hatte, einen Eindruck zu verschaffen. Olmert wurde am Übergang von Shaar Efraim in der Nähe von Tulkarem aufgehalten und bat darum, die Wartezeit der Palästinenser zu verkürzen. Er erklärte: *„Es ist mir wichtig, dass die Leute, die ihren Lebensunterhalt verdienen wollen, nicht um ein Uhr in der Nacht aufstehen müssen, um zwischen sechs Uhr am Morgen und sechs Uhr am Abend den Übergang zu passieren und dass sie nicht stundenlang an den Übergängen warten müssen. Es gibt eine große Bevölkerung, deren Lebensqualität von uns abhängig ist und*

wir müssen offen und tolerant sein." Bei dem Treffen mit Soldaten des Westjordanland-Regiments sagte Olmert: *„Wir möchten eine gute Nachbarschaft und auf dieser Linie bewegen wir uns."*

Die israelische Armee hat gestern Abend die geplante Verfügung eingefroren, die es Israelis untersagen sollte, Palästinenser im Westjordanland ohne Genehmigung in ihren Wagen zu transportieren. Gegen die geplante Verfügung hatte es in letzter Zeit Kritik seitens Juristen und Menschenrechtsorganisationen gegeben. Der Befehlshaber der Zentralkommandantur Yair Naveh, der die Verfügung initiiert hatte, begründete die Entscheidung mit der Beurteilung der Juristen, die erklärten, dass zuvor andere Dinge geregelt werden müssten.«

Bei ihrer Begegnung mit Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel in Berlin kündigt US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice ein Nahost-Gipfeltreffen unter Beteiligung der USA in den kommenden drei bis vier Wochen an. „Ich habe den Eindruck, es ist Bewegung gekommen in die Frage des israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikts", erklärt Merkel auf der gemeinsamen Pressekonferenz mit Rice. Sie zeigt sich bereit, „im Rahmen des Quartetts" politische Verantwortung zu übernehmen und erwartet von der Regelung des israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikts beruhigende Auswirkungen für die gesamte Region. Rice schließt sich dieser Erwartung an und wiederholt ihre Absicht, alle sechs Wochen in die Region zu reisen.

Hanna Siniora, mit Gershon Baskin gemeinsamer Vorsitzender des „Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI)", räumt politischen Fortschritten beim geplanten Nahost-Gipfeltreffen geringe Chancen ein. Als erste Schritte der Entspannung zwischen beiden Seiten schlägt Siniora vor, dass Israel die Erlaubnis erteilt, das „Orient House" in Ost-Jerusalem als politische Residenz der Palästinenser in der Stadt wiederzueröffnen, dass die palästinensische Handelskammer und andere Institutionen ihre Arbeit wiederaufnehmen können, dass eine autonome

Stadtverwaltung in Ost-Jerusalem für kommunale Dienstleistungen ihre Arbeit eingerichtet wird, dass die wirtschaftliche Infrastruktur im Ostteil der Stadt gestärkt wird, dass das Fluggelände Atarot seinen Betrieb für Kurzstreckenflüge in die angrenzenden Länder aufnehmen und das Gelände für einen von israelischen und palästinensischen Unternehmern gemeinsam betriebenen Technologiepark genutzt wird. Der zentrale Status Ost-Jerusalems als kulturelles und ökonomisches Zentrum des palästinensischen Volkes müsse wiederbelebt und die Zufahrten nach Bethlehem im Süden und Ramallah im Norden frei zugänglich sein.

16.01.2007:

Die israelische Zeitung „Haaretz" berichtet über informelle Gespräche des früheren Generaldirektors im israelischen Außenministerium Alon Liel mit Syrien in den Jahren 2004 bis 2006 unter Vermittlung von Geoffrey Aronson, dem Leiter der „Foundation for Middle East Peace" in Washington, D.C., über die Zukunft der Golanhöhen und veröffentlicht den dazugehörigen Vertragsentwurf[175]. Die israelische und die syrische Regierung weisen die Behauptung vehement zurück, während sie in Washington bestätigt wird. Uzi Benziman schreibt zu den Meldungen in derselben Zeitung am 17. Januar, dass die Regierung in Jerusalem alles daran zu setzen scheine, die sechzig Jahre lang andauernde Feindschaft zu Syrien nicht zu beenden, indem sich die Führung den Siedlern auf den Golanhöhen und der Administration in Washington beuge. Die Glaubwürdigkeit des amtlichen Dementi kommentiert der Israel-Korrespondent der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung" Jörg Bremer mit den Sätzen: „Seit 2003 gibt es einen Entwurf für einen Vertrag Israels mit den Palästinensern. Die **›Genfer Initiative‹** wurde von dem damaligen PLO-Chef [Yasser] Arafat und dem jetzigen Präsidenten [Machmud] Abbas mitgetragen. Auf israelischer Seite waren wie jetzt bei dem Syrien-Papier auch frühere Regierungsmitglieder, wie der frühere Minister [Yossi] Beilin, federführend. Die ›Genfer Initiative‹ entstand während der zweiten

Intifada in einem politischen Vakuum, aus dem heraus Scharon seinen Plan für einen einseitigen Abzug [aus dem Gazastreifen und vier Siedlungen im Norden der Westbank] entwickelte, um die politische Initiative zurückzugewinnen.“ Am 18. Januar bestätigt Liel in einem Vortrag in Netanya die informellen Gespräche mit dem amerikanisch-syrischen Geschäftsmann Ibrahim Suleiman, der Verbindungen nach Damaskus unterhält. Am 25. Januar macht der frühere israelische Botschaft in Berlin, Avi Primor, in der „Jüdischen Allgemeinen“, darauf aufmerksam, dass Israel von Anfang an den Wunsch geäußert habe, mit jedem Nachbarstaat, der dazu bereit sei, Verhandlungen aufzunehmen, und dass sich heute eine solche Möglichkeit biete: „Syrien, Palästinenser wie auch die meisten arabischen Länder erklären offen ihre Gesprächsbereitschaft.“ Am 28. Januar berichtet Akiva Eldar in „Haaretz“, dass auf Antrag von Zahava Gal-On („Meretz/Yachad“) Liel im Auswärtigen und Sicherheitsausschuss der Knesset über seine Gespräche mit syrischen Vertretern berichten soll. Am 1. Februar berichtet Jörg Bremer in der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung“, dass Liel bestätigt habe, „dass stets israelische Regierungsvertreter bei seinen von Schweizer Diplomaten begleiteten Gesprächen mit einem offiziellen syrischen Unterhändler in Bern anwesend waren.“ Auch Washington wisse, so wird Liel von Bremer weiter zitiert, dass Syrien für das Zugeständnis syrischer Souveränität über den Golan bereit sei, seine Bindungen zu Iran, Hizbullah und Hamas zu kappen, um nicht mehr zur ›Achse des Bösen‹ zu gehören“.

Im Gefolge des militärischen Dramas in Libanon reicht der israelische Generalstabschef Generalleutnant Dan Halutz bei Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert noch vor dem nicht absehbaren Bericht der von der Regierung eingesetzten Winograd-Untersuchungskommission seinen Rücktritt ein. In seinem Gesuch beklagt er sich über die mangelhafte Unterstützung der militärischen Führung und seitens der Öffentlichkeit[176]. Politische Kommentatoren verlangen, dass sich jetzt auch Olmert und Verteidigungsminister Amir Peretz der Verantwortung stellen.

15.01.2007:

Im Interview mit der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung" streitet der Chef der „Freien Patriotischen Bewegung (FPM)" Libanons, der maronitisch-christliche Politiker Michel Aoun, der mit der „Hisbollah" verbündet ist, die Lieferung von Waffen durch Syrien und Iran nicht rundheraus ab, betont jedoch, dass die „Partei Gottes" auch so ausreichend für einen neuen Krieg mit Israel gut versorgt sei. Damit bestätigt Aoun eine Aussage von „Hisbollah"-Chef Hassan Nasrallah gegenüber der libanesischen Zeitung „Al-Manar (Der Leuchtturm)" – dem TV-Sender der „Hisbollah" – vom 21. Oktober 2006. Aoun kündigt für September oder Oktober die Bekanntgabe seiner Kandidatur für das Amt des Staatspräsidenten an, wenn die Amtszeit von Emile Lahoud abläuft. 2004 hatte Damaskus die Verlängerung der Amtszeit Lahouds gegen innerlibanesische Widerstände durchgesetzt.

Der stellvertretende israelische Verteidigungsminister Ephraim Sneh beklagt nach seinem Besuch in Hebron den Zusammenbruch von Recht und Ordnung, die in der Hand der Besatzung liegen. Der frühere Justizminister im Kabinett Ariel Sharons, Josef („Tommy") Lapid, fordert die Regierung auf, „die jüdischen Barbaren in Hebron zu stoppen"[177].

14.01.2007:

Auf der gemeinsamen Pressekonferenz mit US-Außenministerin Condoleezza Rice in Ramallah weist Präsident Machmud Abbas Vorschlage von Israels Außenministerin Tsipi Livni zurück, zunächst einen palästinensischen Staat in vorläufigen Grenzen zu schaffen; Abbas befürchtet, dass sich diese nicht mehr verändern lassen. Rice verpflichtet sich zur Hilfe für eine Lösung, in der Israelis und Palästinenser „in Sicherheit, Frieden und Demokratie" leben können: „Ich versichere Ihnen, Herr Präsident, so wie ich es anderen

zugesagt habe, dass ich klar und laut den Ruf nach einem tieferen amerikanischen Engagement in diesen Prozessen vernommen habe. … Mein Wunsch ist, dass das palästinensische Volk in der Lage ist, in Würde, Demokratie und Frieden mit einer Regierung zu leben, die von der internationalen Gemeinschaft respektiert und unterstützt wird[178]." Das anschließende Gespräch zwischen Rice und Ehud Olmert in Jerusalem geht ergebnislos zu Ende. Bei ihrem Besuch in Kuwait am 16. Januar schließt sich Rice der Bewertung von Abbas mit der Einschätzung an, dass schon die Festlegung vorläufiger Grenzen eines palästinensischen Staates schwierig genug sei. Leslie Susser zitiert in einem Bericht der „Jewish Telegraphic Agency" am selben Tag einen „hohen US-Vertreter" mit der Aussage, dass Rice das israelisch-palästinensische Problem während ihrer verbleibenden Amtszeit zur Chefsache gemacht habe und den Nahen Osten jeden Monat zu besuchen beabsichtige.

Rund elftausend in israelischen Gefängnissen einsitzende Palästinenser veranstalten einen Hungerstreik, um ihre Haftbedingungen zu verbessern.

11.01.2007:

In seiner Ansprache an das US-amerikanische Volk bezeichnet Präsident George W. Bush die Lage im Irak als unhaltbar. Wenn Fehler gemacht worden seien, trage er dafür die Verantwortung. Bush kündigt nach Beratungen mit seinen Teams und unter Nutzung des Berichts der „Iraq Study Group" von James Baker und Lee Hamilton[179] einen „Strategiewechsel" an. Da ein Scheitern im Irak für die USA eine Katastrophe wären, müsse das Schwergewicht auf die Lösung von Sicherheitsfragen besonders in Bagdad gelegt werden. Deshalb fordert Bush die Stärkung der irakischen Streitkräfte, zu deren Unterstützung weitere fünf Brigaden mit mehr als 20.000 – tatsächlich 21.500 – US-Soldaten entsandt würden, womit im Irak knapp 154.000 Mann stationiert wären. Bush droht mit nicht näher erläuterten Konsequenzen für den Fall, dass die irakische Regierung

ihren Verpflichtungen nicht nachkommen sollte[180]. Auch US-amerikanische Kommentatoren äußern sich skeptisch bis ablehnend zur Rede Bushs[181]. James Dobbins, Direktor bei der der „RAND Corporation“ und früherer stellvertretender US-Außenminister, bezeichnet am 17. Januar in der „International Harald Tribune“ die Rede als „furchterregend“. In einem Interview mit der „Berliner Zeitung“ am 18. Januar nennt sie der frühere US-Botschafter in Deutschland, Richard Holbrooke, „fürchterlich“. Einen Krieg gegen Iran würde der US-Generalstab nicht mittragen. Am 18. Januar bringen drei Senatoren, die Demokraten Joseph Biden und Carl Levin sowie der Republikaner Chuck Hagel, einen Resolutionsentwurf in den Senat ein, wonach die Truppenverstärkung im Irak nicht im nationalen Interesse der USA liege. Die „gefährlich unverantwortliche Politik des Präsidenten“ müsse beendet werden, begründet Hagel seine Mitwirkung an dem Entwurf. Auch die New Yorker Senatorin Hillary Rodham Clinton unterstützt ihn.

10.01.2007:

Im Interview mit der Nachrichtenagentur „Reuters” bezeichnet der Leiter des Politischen Büros von „Hamas” in Damaskus, Khaled Meshal, Israel als eine Realität. Seine Anerkennung komme jedoch erst nach Gründung des palästinensischen Staates in Frage[182]. Von China aus, wo er sich zu einem Staatsbesuch aufhält, verwahrt sich Ehud Olmert gegen die Aufforderung, das Interview mit Meshal zu lesen.

Der Vorsitzende der Arbeitspartei, Verteidigungsminister Amir Peretz, kündigt an, dass an die Stelle von Ophir Pines-Paz, der im November 2006 als Wissenschafts-, Kunst- und Sportminister aus Protest gegen die Einbeziehung von Avigdor Lieberman in die Regierung zurückgetreten war[183], der arabische Abgeordnete Raleeb Madjadele aus Baqa al-Garbiyeh im „Kleinen Dreieck“ treten solle. Madjadele wäre der erste arabische Minister in einem israelischen

Kabinett. Kommentatoren werfen Peretz vor, dass er mit dem Vorschlag vor allem die arabische Bevölkerung Israels erreichen wolle.

In Madrid beginnt eine zweitägige internationale Konferenz aus Anlass des 15. Jahrestages der Madrider Friedenskonferenz Ende Oktober 1991 unter dem Titel „Madrid+15“. In einer Erklärung sprechen sich die Teilnehmer für eine internationale Intervention zur Beilegung des israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikts aus und betonen die wegweisende Bedeutung der der „Clinton-Parameters“ (2000), der Beiruter Erklärung der Arabischen Liga (2002), der **„Genfer Initiative“** (2003) und der „Road Map“ (2003). Zur palästinensischen Delegation gehören Hanan Ashrawi, Nabil Shaath, Djibril Radjoub und Mustafa Barghouti, zur israelischen Delegation Shlomo Ben-Ami, Dan Meridor, Colette Avital, Ophir Pines-Raz und Gershon Baskin. Von Seiten der „Genfer Initiative“ sind Saman Khoury und Michal Radoshitzky vertreten. Für Shaath ist von dem Besuch Rices in der Region nichts zu erwarten. Deshalb sei die Zeit für die Araber und die internationale Gemeinschaft gekommen, „die Amerikaner fallenzulassen und einen Prozess einzuleiten, der am Ende die Unterstützung der USA gewinnt, so wie es mit Oslo geschah“.

09.01.2007:

Die Kolumnistin Amira Hass wirft in „Haaretz“ der von „Hamas“ geführten palästinensischen Regierung Doppelzüngigkeit vor: Sie setze die Tradition von „Fatah“ nach innen und nach außen fort[184].

Nach zahllosen Beschwerden von Passagieren über ihre entwürdigende und demütigende Behandlung bei der Abfertigung am Flughafen Ben-Gurion in Tel Aviv, denen besonders arabische Staatsbürger ausgesetzt seien, bittet die israelische Frauenorganisation „Machsom Watch“[185] die Flughafenleitung und Tourismusminister Shaul Mofaz, bei der Ausbildung der für die

Sicherheit zuständigen Mitarbeiter zu helfen[186]. Die Flughafenleitung verspricht Abhilfe.

08.01.2007:

Ohne Berücksichtigung der jüdischen Bevölkerung im arabischen Teil Jerusalems ist die Zahl der Israelis in der Westbank nach Angaben des Innenministeriums im abgelaufenen Jahr um 5,8 Prozent auf 268.379 gestiegen; im Jahr 2005 lebten dort 253.748 Israelis. Die Größe der palästinensischen Bevölkerung wird mit 2,5 Millionen angegeben.

Nachdem Bewaffnete mit der Tötung von „Kollaborateuren und Verrätern" gedroht haben, erklärt das Exekutivkomitee der PLO auf seiner Sitzung in Ramallah seine Unterstützung für die Pläne von Präsident Machmud Abbas, die Militäreinheit („Executive Force") von Ministerpräsident Ismail Haniyeh in die allgemeinen Sicherheitsdienste zu integrieren.

Das „European Human Rights Network" mit Sitz in Brüssel und Kopenhagen berichtet unter Berufung auf israelische Quellen, dass im Jahr 2006 bei Zusammenstößen 660 Palästinenser und siebzehn Israelis ums Leben gekommen sind.

Der ehemalige israelische Ministerpräsident Ehud Barak, der im Februar 2001 gegen Ariel Sharon unterlag, kündigt seine Bewerbung um den Vorsitz der Arbeitspartei an. Die parteiinternen Wahlen sollen am 24. Mai stattfinden. Zu Baraks Konkurrenten gehört Ami Ayalon – ehemals Befehlshaber der Marine und Chef des Inlandsgeheimdienstes „Shin Bet"[187] –, der sich am 11. Januar zu seinen politischen Vorstellungen in der „Jerusalem Post" äußerte[188].

Israels Verteidigungsminister Amir Peretz und sein Stellvertreter Ephraim Sneh (beide Arbeitspartei) stellen der Presse eine dreistufige „neue Road Map" vor, die „eine neue Realität" in den

Beziehungen zu den Palästinensern schaffen solle. Einen Rückzug aus den Siedlungsblöcken der Westbank schließt der Plan aus. Zu Libanon und Syrien enthält er keine Aussagen. Auch in den eigenen Reihen der Arbeitspartei trifft der Plan auf Skepsis.

07.01.2007:

Die Londoner „Sunday Times" berichtet von israelischen Geheimplänen, iranische Uran-Anreicherungsanlagen mit taktischen Atomwaffen zu zerstören, wenn konventionelle militärische Interventionen versagen und die USA nicht intervenieren würden[189]. Das Außenministerium in Jerusalem dementiert solche Pläne.

04.01.2007:

Israels Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert und Ägyptens Staatspräsident Hosni Mubarak treffen im ägyptischen Badeort Sharm el-Sheikh zu einem vierstündigen Gespräch zusammen. Auch wenn beide sich ihrer gegenseitigen Hochachtung versichern, lassen die Gespräche in einer „offenen und konstruktiven Atmosphäre" keine politischen Fortschritte erkennen. Mubarak kritisiert auf der gemeinsamen Pressekonferenz die Tötung von vier Palästinensern durch eine israelische Armeeeinheit in Ramallah als „Hindernis für den Frieden". Im Gegenzug bedauert Olmert den fortgesetzten Waffenschmuggel an der ägyptischen Grenze in den Gazastreifen und die anhaltende Gefangenschaft des israelischen Gefreiten Gilad Shalit seit dem 25. Juni. Mubarak gibt bekannt, dass die Überweisung der Geldsumme, die der palästinensische Ministerpräsident Ismail Haniyeh in arabischen Ländern gesammelt hat[190], gegen ägyptisches Recht verstoße und deshalb unterbleiben werde.

Bei ihrem einstündigen Treffen mit Präsident George W. Bush in Washington verwendet sich Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel für die Stärkung des Nahost-Quartetts und die Wiederbelebung der „Road Map" vom April 2003.

Der Nationale Sicherheitsberater unter den US-Präsidenten Gerald R. Ford und George H.W. Bush und heutige Präsident des „Forum for International Policy“, Brent Scowcroft, ruft in einem Meinungsbeitrag für die „New York Times“ die Regierung in Washington dazu auf, sich gegen die Gefahren des internationalen Terrorismus und der iranischen Drohung der Unterstützung der arabischen Staaten zu versichern. Dabei würde ein kühner Anstoß zur Lösung des arabisch-israelischen Konflikts die Dynamik in der Region und das strategische Kalkül ihrer Führer von Grund auf ändern, Iran in die Defensive drängen, „Hisbollah“ und „Hamas“ ihres gemeinsamen Prinzips berauben sowie Ägypten, Saudi-Arabien und die Golfstaaten dazu anhalten, bei der Stabilisierung Iraks zu helfen, damit dieses Land in das regionale Sicherheitsnetz einbezogen werden könne. Scowcroft plädiert außerdem für eine Annäherung an Syrien, das von einer Regelung mit Israel gewinnen würde. Nur die USA könnten die arabischen Führer und Ministerpräsident Ehud Olmert an den Verhandlungstisch zurückbringen. Zur Entscheidung stehe die Zuverlässigkeit der Vereinigten Staaten als Partner in einer von tiefem Leid geprägten Welt[191].

03.01.2007:

Die Knesset billigt mit der Koalitionsmehrheit von sechzig gegen 31 Stimmen bei sechs Enthaltungen – zu denen die drei „United Torah Judaism“-Abgeordneten Yaakov Litzman, Meir Porush und Shmuel Halpert gehören – den Haushaltsplan für 2007 in Höhe von 294,5 Mrd. Neue Shekel (rund 47,4 Mrd. Euro). Yitzhak Galantee („Gil“-Seniorenpartei) ist der einzige Koalitionär, der dagegen stimmt. Die Abgeordneten Shelly Yachimowich (Arbeitspartei) und Marina Solodkin („Kadima“) enthalten sich der Stimme.

02.01.2007:

Teddy Kollek, zwischen 1965 und 1993 Bürgermeister von Jerusalem, stirbt im Alter von 95 Jahren. Der Soziologe Meron Benvenisti, der zeitweilig Kolleks Stellvertreter war, erinnert am 4. Januar in einem Gastkommentar für „Haaretz“ daran, dass in dessen Amtszeit 60.000 Wohnungen in Jerusalem gebaut worden seien, davon 35.000 im arabischen Teil der Stadt. Die jüdische Bevölkerung sei von 200.000 auf 400.000 gewachsen, die arabische Bevölkerung von 70.000 auf 150.000. Die Stadtgrenzen seien nach dem Junikrieg 1967 von einstigen vierzig Quadratkilometern auf 123 Quadratkilometer erweitert worden. Durch erhebliche Abwanderungen in die jüdischen Vorstädte sei die Stadt verarmt. Der Kolumnist von „Haaretz“, Gideon Levy, bezeichnet am 7. Januar „den aufgeklärten Wiener Liberalen“ Kollek als den „größten Siedler“. Er habe nach seinem Amtsantritt als Bürgermeister Jerusalems trotz der enormen Entwicklungsleistungen als geteilte und wunde Stadt hintergelassen[192].

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[1] Barak Ravid. PM to Abbas: Israel won’t undermine final status talks, in „Haaretz“-online 28.12.2007: Israel will not undermine negotiations toward a final-status agreement, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert promised Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas during their meeting in Jerusalem on Thursday. "Israel will take no steps that would undermine the ability to reach a final-status agreement or that would delay the negotiations," Olmert told Abbas during their first meeting since the Annapolis conference a month ago.The prime minister made the statement in response to Palestinian complaints about the announced tender for the construction of 307 new homes in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Har Homa. However, he did not promise that the tender would be halted. According to one government source, "the sides resolved the differences that had been weighing on the talks and agreed to proceed with negotiations on the core issues." That is the term used to describe the thorniest disputes between Israel and the Palestinians, namely Jerusalem, refugees and borders. "Both sides wanted to resolve the crisis and recognized that there is no point in stalling the entire process over such an issue," explained another senior government source. According to that source, Olmert and Abbas agreed that the matter of construction in the territories, as well as in Jerusalem, will be discussed during the negotiations on the core issues. The two also agreed to resume their biweekly meetings, and to have their negotiating teams meet again next week. At that meeting, the teams will seek to reach an agreement on a framework for talks on the core issues. The Palestinians also raised the issue of a prisoner release, and Olmert told Abbas that Israel intended to "loosen" its definition of "blood on their hands," the euphemism used in Israel to describe Palestinians who were involved in murdering Israelis. "We are considering the release of veteran prisoners who we are sure will not go back to terrorism, but there is still no decision on this matter," the senior government source said. At the start of the meeting, Abbas expressed the Palestinians' opposition to further construction at Har Homa and protested the issuance of the tender. In response, Olmert said that "Israel will not construct new settlements, will not

confiscate land and will evacuate the illegal outposts." "Israel wishes to conduct the negotiations with goodwill," the prime minister added. Two earlier meetings of the negotiating teams, headed respectively by Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and former Palestinian prime minister Ahmed Qureia, had gone nowhere, as the talks stalled over the issue of settlement construction. On Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice telephoned both Olmert and Abbas and asked them to use their meeting to resolve the impasse. "It is important to me that you progress," Rice told the two leaders, adding that they must not allow the differences between them to widen.

[2] UN: PA donors' conference is step towards Palestinian state, in "Haaretz"-online 22.12.2007: The United Nations Security Council called this week's Palestinian Authority donors conference a "strong signal of support for the Palestinian people" and an important step toward the creation of a Palestinian state living at peace with Israel, in a statement released on Friday.
The conference, held Monday in Paris, was the most ambitious fundraising effort in more than a decade, with 87 countries and international organizations pledging 7.4 billion over the next three years to the Palestinians. The money is aimed at helping the Palestinians create a viable, peaceful and secure state of their own, and to promote new peace talks with Israel. A press statement approved by all 15 council members on Friday reaffirmed the council's commitment to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.
"The members of the Security Council welcome the international donors' conference ... which has provided a strong international signal of support to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority and which constitutes an important step in a broader process aiming at the realization of the vision of two states living side by side in peace and security," the statement said.
The council thanked donors and urged that the money be rapidly disbursed. It also urged all countries and international organizations to assist in developing the Palestinian economy and help build Palestinian institutions in preparation for statehood.
Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian UN observer, said that while the statement did not reflect all the elements the Palestinians wanted it to include "we consider it as a step in the right direction." "It is a modest but important step," he said. "The significance of it is that the Security Council is determined to remain engaged in the political process and to help to see the negotiation between the two parties reach its ultimate conclusion by reaching a peace treaty, hopefully during the year 2008."
"This would put an end to occupation and to allow the Palestinian state to be born next to Israel on all the areas that Israel occupied in 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital and a just solution to the refugee question," Mansour said.
He said this statement, in conjunction with the Paris donors conference, the U.S.-sponsored Mideast conference in Annapolis, Maryland, and UN General Assembly resolutions in support of the Palestinians, indicate that the international community is determined to continue being engaged and to help the two parties to reach that peace treaty and allow the Palestinian state to be born.
On Nov. 30, the United States suddenly withdrew a UN resolution endorsing the agreement between Israeli and Palestinian leaders at the Annapolis conference to try to reach a Mideast peace settlement by the end of 2008 because of Israeli objections, even though it had overwhelming support in the Security Council. Well-informed diplomats said at the time that Israel did not want a resolution because it would bring the Security Council, which it distrusts, into the fledgling negotiations with the Palestinians.
The brief statement that the council agreed to did not mention Annapolis.
France's UN Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert, whose country drafted the statement, welcomed the spirit of compromise in reaching agreement on the text shown by Palestinian and Israeli diplomats, saying it clearly had its roots in Annapolis. "It will be in our view a very strong signal, a positive step towards achieving the goals of the Annapolis conference," he said.
Why did the council agree on Friday's statement and not on the resolution endorsing the outcome of the Annapolis meeting? "It is very clear that this text is mainly about the support that was expressed in the Paris conference to the

Palestinian state and the Palestinian people, but the conference in Paris took place in the framework of Annapolis," Ripert said.
"So by recognizing the important step and the positive step of the Paris conference, of course, we are also taking note of the success that was Annapolis," he said.

[3] 1) Yossi Beilin: Dear friends, As you might have heard, yesterday [16 December 2007] I announced that I shall not seek a second term as chairman of the Meretz-Yachad Party.
The decision was not an easy one for me, but, I believe, the right one. For the recent decision by my Meretz Party colleague Haim Oron ("Jumes") to join the race meant that I would have to compete with a man who walks the same political path as I, and who is, moreover, a close personal friend. And this I would not do. I have held this principle my entire my political life – that I will not run against a comrade who walks the same political path. And although Oron's decision to run surprised me, catching me well into my own re-election campaign, my ideological closeness with Oron dictated my move.
Let me underscore that I joined the Meretz-Yachad party in 2003 not in order to become its chairman so much as to be a part of it. For Meretz is a unique party in the Israeli political landscape: a party that privileges values and ideas above being in power; a party that fights every day for a better and more just Israel; a party that ceaselessly promotes its positions, even when they are not popular, until they become adopted by the majority. Next March, I will have served as party chairman for four years. And although I will no longer serve as party chairman once a new one is elected, I intend to continue being a full and active member of this party and, of course, to continue representing it in the Knesset.
Indeed, there are certain advantages to not serving as party chairman, and the most salient one for me is the greater time that I will be able to dedicate to the peace process, especially in the coming year. Last month's Annapolis conference set an ambitious agenda for Israel and the Palestinians of concluding negotiations on a permanent-status agreement by January 2009. Although not an official deadline, January 2009 is as real a deadline as deadlines go, since what will not be achieved during 2008 will not be achieved in 2009. This is both because Abu Mazen will end his term that month, and because any new American administration that will be inaugurated that month will take its time before investing itself in the Middle East peace process.
Given the urgency of completing an agreement in 2008, and the general sense of skepticism about the feasibility of doing so within one year – the dominant feeling is that, even if the substantive features of the final deal are already known, the actual process of reaching an agreement is technically too difficult and procedurally too intricate for the parties to reach an agreement in 12 months – I am already working diligently on convening a major conference of experts next month in Tel Aviv. The experts, who will include key figures from past negotiations between Israel, the Palestinians and the Syrians, will be asked to respond to the question, "How to Reach an Agreement in 2008." Needless to say, the overarching thesis of this conference is that it is possible, and the public, as well as our decision-makers, need to be convinced that it is.
For now, I thank you all for your steadfast support, and I will continue updating you on my work as always.
Yours always,
Yossi [Beilin]

2) Eine aktivistischere Meretz-Partei (Leitartikel), in "Haaretz"-online 17.12.2007:
There is probably no one else in Israeli politics like Yossi Beilin – a brave weakling, a leader who never swayed the enthusiastic masses, and yet who still managed to carry away the center of the political map and get it to adopt his political path. Beilin's direction was laid out in the Beilin-Abbas agreement. Its main point was to aim for a final-status agreement, oppose any unilateral move, and have two countries for two peoples within borders approximating those of 1967, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine and West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. These are the outlines that the world adopted as the desired solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Some say that an agreement in this vein will be reached only after more blood is shed; some say it will not be attained until terror has disappeared from the world; some hope it will never be attained, but in the meantime no more logical a solution has been presented. These statements are correct even after Beilin stepped down from the Meretz leadership yesterday.
In contrast to other leftist leaders, Beilin not only demonstrated and charted ideology, but also initiated and implemented steps, actually spurring on governments, and never declaring, like Ehud Barak after the failure of Camp David, that there was no one to talk to. He always sought, on the Palestinian side, someone with whom he could formulate a new agreement, to move something ahead, one step and then another, and another, the main thing being to pursue the way to a solution of the conflict, without giving up Israeli interests or the right of Israel to use force if necessary.
Beilin went to Meretz for lack of choice; this opposition party never really suited him. After he was not selected for a realistic slot on the Labor Party list, he looked for a political home from which he could promote a new agreement. But as the leader of a small party he did not have the power to make an impact, even if his personal influence on decision-makers remained significant. All the social issues that made Meretz what it is – a groundbreaker in civil and human rights, gender equality, civil marriage and separation of religion and state – remained orphaned during his term as party leader. Meretz did not retain its status in these areas after Shulamit Aloni, Dedi Tzuker and Yossi Sarid left. Zahava Gal-On is right when she says that Beilin's departure is a chance to make Meretz relevant again.
Meretz today also has an important role to play in setting the public agenda and in fighting for values which tend to be easily neglected because of a too-heavy security agenda. These include continuing to work for a separation of religion and state, continued concern for the protection of the rights of minorities, freedom of information, freedom of expression, protecting the status of the High Court of Justice in the face of those who would try to limit its influence, unceasing concern to preserve Israel as a country in which there is also equality before the law for those who are not Jewish. All these issues are waiting for a more active leadership.
The fact that Beilin supports Haim Oron as his successor should not necessarily influence Meretz members when it comes to selecting their new leader. Anyone for whom civil and human rights are important should choose the candidate who has been seen to have fought for these issues more than others. Perhaps then Meretz will manage to attract new young voters to its ranks.

[4] Yoav Stern: Planned Madrid peace gathering collapses before even taking off, in „Haaretz“ December 16, 2007: MADRID – An investment of hundreds of thousands of dollars, loads of time and countless attempts at intensive Spanish-brokered talks between Israelis and Palestinians went down the drain this past weekend, when a peace gathering that was supposed to be held here collapsed before it could even get started. Spanish organizers grew tearful as they realized there was no possibility of bridging gaps between the various groups and of reaching even minimal discussion among the hawks – mostly members of the leftist camp in their countries. The Forum for a Just Peace in the Middle East was supposed to convene over the weekend in a town near Madrid called Alcorcon, with the backing of leftist parties and labor organizations. It was meant to be Spain's contribution to promoting talks between the sides.
Spain, officials emphasize, is very interested in being involved in advancing the peace process. Its foreign minister, Miguel Moratinos, who is handling the matter personally, said this week: "We managed to send men to the moon, but not to resolve this conflict. We must move forward." But it looks like the failure of this forum will be laid at his door. The background to this failure involves a struggle between the government and leftist organizations over responsibility for holding the meeting. Contrary to the usual Mideast scenario, this time the camps did not divide along national lines. There were Israeli Jews and Palestinians in both, but ones who hold completely different positions. The conflict between the camps revolves around the question of a worthy end to the conflict: a two-state solution or one state for two peoples.
In Israeli political terms, representatives of the Zionist center and left faced off against radical leftist activists, who were horrified at the prospect of having to talk to

those they view as "representatives of the occupation." Yael Lerer, founder of Andalus Publishing and an activist in the Balad party, who was invited to address the forum, told Haaretz that she views the people from Peace Now and the Labor Party as another arm of the occupation, and therefore unacceptable for dialog. "It is a huge problem when the heads of the organization do reserve duty in the territories and belong to [Labor Party leader Ehud] Barak's camp and then come to Europe and present themselves as belonging to the peace camp. This is not a camp that wants a just and genuine peace," she said.
Delegates from the Zionist left said Saturday that they do not rule out talking with anyone on the other side. The Palestinian side also divided into two groups: those who boycotted the Israeli presence at the forum and were busy throughout with internal discussions; and those in the mainstream, who are willing to talk to delegates from Zionist parties to advance the establishment of a Palestinian state. In lieu of the forum schedule, the latter went on tours of Madrid along with their Israeli colleagues. Israeli Arabs played a key role in the Palestinian camp, spearheading opposition to the official Israeli and Spanish involvement. Amir Mahoul, general secretary of Ittijah, the umbrella organization of Arab civil groups in Israel, led the fight against turning the forum into an establishment affair. He called for an end to the influence of Israel and the Zionist lobby in Europe and the world. Abd Anabtawi, spokesman for the Israeli Arabs' Higher Monitoring Committee, accused Israel's Foreign Ministry of sabotaging the event. According to Anabtawi, if the various United Nations resolutions do not constitute the basis for peace, there will be only one solution: establishing a secular democratic state in all of Palestine. He rejected the claim that making peace requires negotiating with centrists in Israeli and Palestinian societies.
Acknowledging that this forum lacked any force to impact the situation in the Middle East, Anabtawi blamed Israel for the lost chance to enlist more European support for the Palestinians. "Israel must not force its position on us and on civil society in Spain. The forum was liquidated, murdered in fact, by Israel," he said.

[5] Study: 1 in 5 employees living in poverty, in “Jerusalem Post”-online 16.12.2007:
While the Israeli economy is continuing to grow, the conditions of an overwhelming majority of the general public remain grim, according to a report by the Adva Institute published Saturday evening.
The institute's study shows that the rich are getting richer and the poor remain poor, while the overall number of poverty-stricken people is constantly growing.
According to the study, the economic growth can be gauged by examining the country's top earners. The combined wages of managers in the top 25 companies traded in the stock market averaged four million NIS in 2003; in 2006 this figure rose to NIS 10.4 million.
In contrast, salaried employees considered poor comprised 18.8 percent in 2006, an increase from 2004's 17%. Additionally, 32.7% earned minimum or lower than minimum wage in 2006 as compared with 2001's 29.2%.
The main reason for the growth remaining unfelt in the lower-earning sectors is its unbalanced character. The sectors that developed most in the past few years were Hi-Tech and financial and business-related services. The yield of traditional industries, where most employees earn lower salaries, has decreased. While the report states that unemployment is diminishing, it points to serious gaps between the periphery and the financial centers.
Unemployment in the Arab sector remains very high and provides some of the country's grimmest figures, with one village reaching a 20.9% unemployment rate. Meanwhile, the highest percentage of unemployment in Jewish communities was 9.4%, reported in Kiryat Malachi. The country's lowest unemployment rate was measured in the upper-class towns of Savyon and Ramat Efal, both enjoying unemployment rates as low as 0.5%.
Gaps in the education system were also widening. In 2006, 45.9% of teenagers were entitled to receive a matriculation degree, a drop from 2004 and 2005's 49.2% and 46.4% respectively.
Further, 13% of youths who did hold a matriculation degree still did not withstand the minimal basic requirements of higher education institutions. 56% of matriculation diploma holders from top earning families were accepted for higher

education institutions, compared with a meager 10.3% of those in the lowest earning sector.
Dr. Shlomo Savirsky [Svirsky], the author of the report, said that "the fact that the fruits of growth are held by only a few is good testimony of the processes at work in Israel. Wealth grows this drastically only in the United States. In European countries and in Japan these things don't happen. "Our politicians have abandoned the social emphasis in their policy, and say that the [economic] growth solves everything. In fact, the growth increases inequality. We can close gaps only by investing in health, education, social security and enforcement of labor laws."
Savirsky added that the plight of the poor is unlikely to be solved in the coming year. "Regrettably, the 2008 budget is of a type that reinforces the [negative] directions pointed in the report," he said.

[6] Zvi Bar'el: Bring us war in Gaza, in "Haaretz"-online 16.12.2007: In the end, we will enter Gaza. Not because a "major blow" or "wide-scale operation" can really convince a million and a half people living under siege conditions and poverty that they have nothing left to lose and it is worthwhile to rebel against Hamas. This sense of helplessness already exists in any case. For this purpose, unbearable sanctions have been imposed, which are again based on the same distorted conception that failed in Lebanon.
According to this conception, if civilian targets are hit – and this time we are talking about civilians – the people will rebel against Hamas, and everything will be rosy. But we cannot ignore the contradiction here. If the Israeli sanctions – sharply reducing fuel supplies, the plan to cut electricity, closing crossing points and preventing the movement of goods – were really working, there would be no need for a military attack.
Can a military operation succeed where sanctions have failed? This is precisely the moment to remember that the Qassam rockets and arms smuggling via the Philadelphi route tunnels did not start after sanctions were imposed. They were there when the Israel Defense Forces fully controlled Gaza, when targeted and non-targeted liquidations were the rule, and when Israeli intelligence knew where every car was headed. The IDF's reentry to the Strip, with all its armor and aerial might, assumes that this time the result will be different – without a convincing explanation.
The IDF knows that Gaza is not Jenin refugee camp, or south Lebanon. Gaza is a maze of alleyways with thousands of children, women and old people, as well as ordinary men who do not fire Qassams or set off explosives. According to what the IDF has fed the media in recent weeks, Gaza also has an abundance of explosives, weapons of all types, and in particular, plenty of motivation to fight. All this, of course, should not necessarily deter Israel from attacking targets, buildings or Palestinian forces that continue to fire Qassams.
But the IDF already makes such attacks every day. It also enters populated areas, operates unmanned aerial vehicles and fires freely at Qassam squads. What could a wide-scale operation accomplish that the targeted attacks do not? Can we understand from this that just as a wide-scale operation makes clear the ineffectiveness of sanctions, it also attests to the failure of small-scale and targeted operations?
Or perhaps the only purpose of a wide-scale operation is to satisfy the lust for prestige because a state cannot allow its people to be attacked every day and stand idly by. After all, something must be done, and there is nothing wrong with an occasional showcase operation, which at least would give Sderot's residents renewed faith in their government and counter the feeling (which apparently has some basis) that the people of Sderot are considered less important than those of Tel Aviv or Netanya.
But it turns out that the residents of Sderot are not eager for war in Gaza. They only sought protection for their homes, protection that would certainly cost less than the war the IDF is about to wage against Gaza. But there is no prestige in protection; there is no might and no showcase. Protection is a budget item, while war is a demonstration of strength. Regarding protection, the prime minister can say, "We will not protect ourselves to death." But regarding war, one cannot say, "We will not fight ourselves to death." The latter statement lacks the demagogic ring of the former. Besides, the trauma of Lebanon must heal, and there is nothing like a

successful war to heal a failed war. But there is no way to certify that this would indeed be a more successful war.
In short: a war is needed. We can only guess what the new Palestinian partner, President Mahmoud Abbas, will say when the IDF accidentally hits a school or health clinic. Will he still be able to shake Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's hand and kiss Olmert's wife on the cheek? We could tell him, of course, that he could do us the honor of wiping out terror himself. Abbas would undoubtedly respond that negotiations exist to serve this very purpose.

[7] Yossi Sarid: Woman of the year, in “Haaretz”-online 14.12.2007: My man of the year is a woman: German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Yes, Merkel, the leader of a center-right party, was revealed in 2007 in all her stature as the high priestess of human rights everywhere. Her partners – her rivals from the Social Democratic Party – have been exposed in their dwarfishness and turpitude as having closed their eyes to injustice and villainy. As a social democrat, I am ashamed of their petty calculations.
Like every country, Germany has economic interests in its relations with other countries, especially with Russia and China; the former as a key provider of oil and gas and the latter as a huge and alluring market. Nevertheless, these interests do not blind the chancellor; she sees very well what is happening in Russia, how an elected president has become a czar. And she sees what is happening in China, how economic growth does not affect democracy's growth at all.
Merkel does not remain silent in a selective way because she is not U.S. President George W. Bush; nor is she Gerhard Schroeder, whom she succeeded and who has become Russian President Vladimir Putin's lackey. Nor is she President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert or Defense Minister Ehud Barak, who speak or keep silent in accordance with the convenience of the moment.
When she visited Russia recently, Merkel also met with non-governmental organizations, independent journalists and opponents of the regime, to her hosts' displeasure. In September she hosted the Dalai Lama in her office despite threats and protests from Beijing and warnings from her deputy, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, a Social Democrat.
Who would have believed that the head of a country as important as Germany would tell the Russians and Chinese, in a loud, clear voice, what she thinks of them, and would say in the Bundestag, without fear or calculation, that "a government's foreign and defense policy must be based on values and not interests?" She also said that "it is impossible to demand good behavior at home and not behave well when you go out. Economic considerations must not contradict values of democracy, liberty and human rights."
And wonder of wonders: Although Merkel is taking a risk and her moral position is liable to cost her country dearly, her popularity is rising and her rivals' is dropping. She has the support of 70 percent of the German public. This is because in Germany, and not only in America and Israel, the people get fed up with politicians' double standards, with the unction that fuels the flames. When will our leaders understand that a more moral policy is a more correct policy that is its own reward, even if it is slow in coming?
It is possible and necessary to acknowledge the Armenian genocide without the fear of Turkey becoming an issue. It is possible and necessary to receive the Dalai Lama as an official guest without being deterred by China's reprimands. It is wrong to sell weapons to evil countries that slaughter their citizens, Burma included. There is no need to fawn over Putin, who continues to fawn over Iran and refuses to tighten the sanctions on it, and it is absolutely wrong to legitimize torture and commit war crimes on the grounds of self-defense.
Merkel is the opposite of another woman, U.S. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, a mechanized candidate who lives by the opinion polls, which already predict a pullback by her. It is possible that the Americans also expect a president like Merkel, who is not the continuation of Bush with different lyrics.
Is the ground being broken here too for a leader who understands the special, obligatory mission of "the Jewish state?" And if it is uncomfortable to take an example from the Germans, we can take it from the Americans, if Senator Barack Obama is elected. Maybe a black president who appears to be a man of values and not just of realpolitik will infuse the world with a different spirit, a better spirit.

Perhaps a president who looks like an Ethiopian is the person who will create an opening for hope for the children of the global kindergarten.

[8] Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network: Syria must stop repression against human rights defenders: Syria must release and immediately put an end to all arbitrary measures against the Al Bunni family and Syrian human rights defenders, who have been subjected to continuous repression.
In the morning of 11 December, writer and activist Akram Al Bunni, who was once a political prisoner for 17 years under Hafez Assad's regime, was arrested by the Syrian security services. No charges have been notified to him. His family remains to this day without news from him.
His brother, Anwar Al Bunni, a laywer and an eminent human rights defender, was sentenced on 24 April 2007 by the criminal court to 5 years of imprisonment following his denunciation of the practice of torture by the security services and his call for democratic reform in Syria. Since his arrest, on 17 May 2006, he has been detained in the prison of Adra, where he has been subjected to mistreatment, although he was supposed to be hospitalised for rheumatic pains.
Anwar Al Bunni's wife is also a victim of arbitrary measures, as she was dismissed in May 2007 from her job in the Ministry of Transports following a decision of the Prime Minister.
At the moment when the world is about to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, It seems like the Syrian government has decided to carry out a campaign of arrests against opponents to the regime and human rights defenders.
These arrests are occurring in the aftermath of the meeting, on 1 December 2007, of the Committee of the Damascus Declaration, which gathered 163members.
Among the defenders still detained are Jabr Shouffi, member of the Committees for the Defense of Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights in Syria (CDF), and Ahmed Tamaa, defender and member of the political opposition.
The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) requests the Syrian authorities to respect all obligations contained in the international instruments ratified by Syria, and consequently to immediately release Akram and Anwar Al-Bunni, Jabr Shouffi and Ahmed Tamaa.
The EMHRN also urges the Syrian authorities to put an end with no further delay to acts of harassment, arrests and arbitrary detention of human rights defenders and opposition leaders and to release the other detainees who were condemned for having exercised their right to freedom of expression and association.
Finally, the EMHRN calls on the European Union and its member states to take all appropriate measures of support and assistance to Syrian human rights defenders under threat.

[9] Gamal Essam El-Din: Opposition slams away, in "Al-Ahram Weekly" 13.-16.12.20007: Opposition and independent MPs decided this week to intensify their barrage of interpellations (questions that must be answered by cabinet ministers) at the government despite the refusal of the speaker of the People Assembly Fathi Sorour to approve more interpellations even if they are corroborated by newspaper clippings.
On Sunday, several MPs, mostly members of the Muslim Brotherhood and leftists, submitted 20 additional interpellations, claiming that they draw on official reports prepared by state authorities such as the Central Auditing Agency (CAA). This brings the number of interpellations that have been submitted to a total of 85 in less than two weeks.
As expected, Sunday's new batch of interpellations tackled thorny, and in some cases embarrassing, issues mostly focussing on the private monopolies of business tycoons belonging to the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). Other questions allege that normalisation of relations between Egypt and Israel is to blame for the arrest of several Israeli spies working in Egypt.
Mustafa Bakri, an independent MP with nationalist leanings, took the policies of the government of Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif to task for the accumulation of wealth and riches in the hands of no more than three per cent of all Egyptians, with most of the businessmen who exploited their membership in the NDP gaining tremendous wealth. "One of these is multi- billionaire Naguib Sawiris who is on the list of the

richest people in the world, with his wealth now close to LE120 billion [1 Euro ~ 8 Egypt Pounds]," said Bakri. Although Sawiris is not an NDP member, Bakri alleged that the close relationship between former and senior NDP officials was behind the rapid growth in his wealth.
Bakri claimed that the number of multi- billionaires in Egypt now accounts for three per cent of the population, with their wealth hovering at around LE500 billion. "This has happened at a time when the number of Egyptians who live on just $2 per day accounts for 70 per cent of the population," Bakri added.
Bakri also said he believed that the growth in the number of multi-billionaires came at the expense of the middle class in Egypt. "This class is the source of all revolutions. Imagine how angry they become when they see how wealthy family dynasties like Sawiris have become influential centres of power in this country," said Bakri who alleged that Sawiris had become so influential that he now can impose orders on the governor of the Central Bank and the minister of communications.
In another interpellation directed at Nazif, Brotherhood MP firebrand Saad El-Hussein alleged he was in the possession of documents certifying how the former housing minister Ibrahim Suleiman facilitated the sale of large plots of land to a handful of businessmen closely associated with the NDP at cheap prices. El-Husseini cited the name of business tycoon Hisham Talaat Mustafa who was able to get 33 million metres of land around Cairo at a subsidised price. "The government offered him the land at a symbolic price of LE30 per metre in order to build housing units at reasonable prices to limited-income classes," said El-Husseini, adding, "instead, Mustafa built luxurious housing units, with a price per metre as much as LE3,000 (~ while the value of the land as a whole climbed to LE26 billion." Mustafa is a member of Gamal Mubarak's Policies Committee and a major financial contributor to the housing projects of Gamal's Future Generation Foundation.
Mohamed Abdel-Alim Dawoud, a member of the liberal-oriented Wafd Party, cried foul that his interpellation about the normalisation of labour relations between Egypt and Israel had been rejected five times. "I have official documents showing that there are a lot of Israeli workers in Egypt and a lot of Egyptian workers in Israel," said Dawoud, adding, "the result of this normalisation in labour relations between the two countries is that many spies working for Israel have been arrested in the last five years." The most important of them, added Dawoud, was Azzam Azzam (Israeli) and Emad Abdel-Hamid (Egyptian) both of who were working for Israel. Dawoud warned that more normalisation will encourage Israel to recruit more spies in Egypt at the expense of its national security. Dawoud also claimed that 13 per cent of Egyptians working in Israel are now members of the Israeli army. "Each one of them receives $20 a day plus two meals and these could be future spies on their native country," said Dawoud. He also cited Israeli statistics claiming that 10,000 Egyptians live in Israel and that most of them are married to Israeli women in major Israeli cities like Tel Aviv, Haifa and Beersheba. "In Israel, they formed what is now called the Association of Egyptians in Israel. Its objective is to reinforce their role in Israeli society," Dawoud said.
Ragab Hilal Hemeida, the sole representative of the Ghad Party, also hit at businessmen, warning the government not to sell them strategic drug companies. "In its privatisation drive, the government of Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif aims to sell key drug companies to local and foreign investors. I warn that Israeli businessmen could line up to buy these companies," said Hemeida.
Mahmoud Amer, another Brotherhood MP, said his interpellation focussed on private monopolies in cement production. Amer said the policy of the current and former NDP-supported governments in selling giant cement companies to foreign investors led to the rise of a strong cartel of producers. "This cartel joined forces to raising the price per tonne of cement to an unprecedented LE420 although the cost per tonne does not exceed LE120," said Amer. What is more distressing, said Amer, is that these companies buy energy from the government at a subsidised cost of LE500.
In the meantime, opposition and independent MPs stepped up their campaign against Nazif, accusing his government of offering bribes to NDP MPs. A number of independent MPs, including political science professor Gamal Zahran and lawyer Alaa Abdel-Moneim said they have documents proving that unlike what the

government claims, sums of cash money ranging from LE100,000 to LE250,000 were offered to NDP MPs not to establish local development projects in their districts but to serve their own personal needs. Abdel-Moneim said 22 NDP MPs each received LE100,000, while seven MPs received LE250,000 each. Zahran said most of the money was not used in establishing development projects "but were offered as bribes to voters supporting NDP MPs in their own districts." Zahran said the money offered NDP MPs was not disbursed upon the basis of project feasibility studies as government officials claim. "The fact remains that these bribes were offered in return for rubber-stamping government-inspired laws and the annual state budget," said Zahran. Zahran and Abdel-Moneim threatened to lodge a complaint with the prosecutor-general, requesting him to force NDP MPs to return the so-called bribe money to the state treasury.

[10] Akiva Eldar: Settlers for sale, in „Haaretz“-online 4.12.2007: … Even a few remarks like those made in the film "A Million Bullets in October" – an investigative report about how the second intifada came about that was broadcast on Channel 8 last Saturday – would have shaken a normal democratic country to its very foundation. On the eve of renewing negotiations on a final status agreement, director Moish Goldberg accused the top military brass of charges unparalleled in their seriousness. The charge: Deliberately undermining the peace process with the Palestinians while blatantly violating the political authorities' instructions. The witnesses: Very senior government officials and army officers. Commissions of inquiry have been set up, lessons have (or have not) been learned and people have been fired for less serious, less damaging offenses.
The film claimed the affair was buried under political declarations that there was "no partner." The serious phenomenon of an army against the spirit of the political echelon still exists. It is enough to mention the prime minister's repeated commitments to the Palestinian president that pressure on the West Bank's civilian population will be alleviated, and to compare that to the actual situation. The main stars of October 2000 are still active in the decision-making arena: then-prime minister and defense minister Ehud Barak, and then-chief of staff Shaul Mofaz, who both are in the political and defense cabinet and aspire to take over the premiership.
Here are a few especially harsh testimonies from the film (with editing corrections):
Prof. Shlomo Ben-Ami, who was then foreign minister and headed the negotiating team: "Mofaz said at a cabinet meeting that [Clinton's proposed Middle east peace plan] endangered the existence of the State of Israel. He also said this on the radio. In another country, this would almost be called a putsch. What do you say? Do you have the right to address the public? As chief of staff? And what will be in the next stage – will he send out the tanks? He was not prepared to provide maps for diplomatic discussions. We were running around the world and making this concession, while the army's top brass believed that first and foremost it had to make an imprint on the consciousness that they had to get a beating. These are decisive things."
Ephraim Sneh, then deputy defense minister: "I wrote to Barak to say that in the field, the army – from the chief of staff down to the commanders at the roadblocks – was carrying out a policy opposed to his policy, and that if he did not take swift action, the results would be irreversible. Israeli prime ministers do not really consider themselves the commander in chief of the army, but rather someone who serves it. There were two parallel lines here – political-diplomatic policy, and military behavior.
"I told Barak, '[Marwan] Barghouti is the leader of the street, so let's speak to him'. Barak said, 'I don't mind if you meet with him, but Dichter must approve it.' The prime minister [was] telling the deputy defense minister to get [an] approval for a diplomatic meeting from the Shin Bet security service head. Dichter was opposed. "The OC Southern Command at the time, Yom Tov Samia, told Knesset members, 'No one will tell me how to win this war.' In this kind of confrontation, the government's policy becomes insignificant. Government policy is set by a platoon commander, or even by what was once known in the army as 'the strategic corporal.'"
Gilad Sher, Barak's chief of staff and representative at the peace talks: "There were people in the prime minister's bureau who pulled their hair out when they

understood that we in the State of Israel cannot ensure the government's commitment to the outside world and its instructions to the army, which were not carried out in the end, or were carried out in a way that was not in accord with their original spirit. Military secretary Gadi Eisenkot could not believe such a thing was happening. The prime minister and defense minister had insufficient, unsatisfying control of how the military carried out his instructions.
"We are talking about a phenomenon – the army sends its representatives to the negotiations, but is contemptuous of their possible results. It is not an army officer's job to trample on that political goal, and to broadcast to his subordinates: 'We are merely heading toward a confrontation and there is no reason to assume any kind of diplomatic agreement is possible."
Brig. Gen. (Res). Zvi Fogel, who headed the Southern Command staff: "By February 2000, we had taken very serious moves to prepare the army for a confrontation. At that moment, I understood a confrontation was unavoidable. I created all the conditions for it; it was not that we were forced to use force in order to enable a positive outcome to the political negotiations; the preparations we made led to a confrontation.
"I want to remind you, this was the beginning of 2000, and we were still in the era of joint patrols. You create distress on the other side, which makes him want to break this distress. They called it an intifada. After six weeks of fighting, they had more than 60 dead and we had zero. For them, that was unacceptable..."
Now, the issue of supplying the Palestinian Authority with armored cars teaches us that nothing has changed. Despite the fact that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has made a specific international commitment on this issue, and despite the Israel Defense Forces' confirmation that the Palestinian policemen are faithfully carrying out their jobs in Nablus, the IDF is blatantly disregarding that commitment, and Defense Minister Ehud Barak is keeping mum. And once again, the strongest army in the Middle East claims that if there is a confrontation, it will have trouble dealing with armored vehicles equipped with rifles. Once again, the IDF is preparing for a confrontation that will become a self-fulfilling prophesy.

[11] Scott Mcconnell: The Lobby Strikes Back, in “The American Conservative” 3 December 2007:
One prism through which to gauge the impact of John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt’s The Israel Lobby and American Foreign Policy is a September incident involving Barack Obama. His campaign had placed small ads in various spots around the Internet, designed to drive readers to its website. One turned up on Amazon’s page for the Walt and Mearsheimer book. A vigilant watchdog at the New York Sun spotted it and contacted the campaign: Did Obama support Walt and Mearsheimer?
The answer came within hours. The ad was withdrawn. Its placement was “unintentional.” The senator, his campaign made clear, understood that key arguments of the book were “wrong,” but had definitely not read the work himself. In short, Walt and Mearsheimer had reached a pinnacle of notoriety.
Though The Israel Lobby was on the way to best-sellerdom and has become perhaps the most discussed policy book of the year, the presidential candidate touted as the most fresh-thinking and intellectually curious in the race hastened to make clear he had not been corrupted by the toxic text.
The episode illustrates one of the book’s central arguments: the Israel lobby is powerful, and American politicians fear its wrath. Any Democrat running for president—drawing on a donor stream that is heavily Jewish, very interested in Israel, and perceived as hawkish—would have reacted as Obama did.
In their book’s introduction, Walt and Mearsheimer summarize the consequences of this power. In an election year, American politicians will differ radically on domestic issues, social issues, immigration, China, Darfur, and virtually any other topic. But all will “go to considerable lengths to express their deep personal commitment to one foreign country—Israel—as well as their determination to maintain unyielding support for the Jewish state.” The authors find this remarkable and deserving of analysis, which they provided first in a paper, posted last year on Harvard’s Kennedy School website and published in the London Review of Books, and now expanded into a book.

This is not the first time a prominent American has taken on the subject. George Ball, undersecretary of state in the Johnson and Kennedy administrations and the government official most prescient about Vietnam, a bona fide member of the Wall Street and Washington establishments, called for the recalibration of America's Israel policy in a much noted Foreign Affairs essay in 1977, and at the end of his life co-authored a book on the subject with his son. Eleven-term congressman Paul Findley, defeated after a former AIPAC president called him "a dangerous enemy of Israel," wrote a book that became a bestseller, and there are others.

But no one with the combined skills and eminence of Walt and Mearsheimer has before addressed the subject systematically. These two are mandarins of American academia, having reached the top of a field that attracts smart people. They have tenure, job security, and professional autonomy most journalists' lack. They have the institutional prestige of Harvard and the University of Chicago behind them. Most importantly, they bring first-rate skills of research, synthesis, and argument to their task.

One might wish that their book had been different in some ways—more literary, more discursive, more precise in some of its definitions, deeper in some areas, more (my favorite, from blogger Tony Karon) "dialectical." But The Israel Lobby is an extraordinary accomplishment, completed with great speed—a dense, factually based brief of an argument that is often made but rarely made well.

In public appearances discussing their book, Walt and Mearsheimer are tremendously effective: measured, facts at their fingertips, speaking with the fluency of men accustomed to addressing demanding audiences. Most of all, while treating a subject where hyperbole is common, they are moderate. They are respectful of Israel, admiring of its accomplishments, and extremely aware that criticism of Israel or the Israel lobby can turn ugly and demagogic. As might be expected of top scholars in America, they are fully conscious of what Jews have suffered in the past and how much anti-Semitism has been a moral blot on the West as a whole. So while they have none of the excessive deference, guilt feelings, and reluctance to engage so typical of the remaining WASP elite, they are very well-modulated. Their detractors would have preferred loose-tongued adversaries, Palestinians whose words are raw with loss and resentment, a left wing anti-Zionist like Noam Chomsky, or genuine anti-Semites. Instead, with Walt and Mearsheimer, they are encountering something like the American establishment of a vanished era at its calm, patriotic best.

It is obvious that The Israel Lobby, both the article and the book, would be extremely unwelcome to those pleased with the status quo. Under the current arrangement, the United States gives Israel $3-4 billion in aid and grants a year—about $500 per Israeli and several orders of magnitude more than aid to citizens of any other country. Israel is the only American aid recipient not required to account for how the money is spent. Washington uses its Security Council veto to shield Israel from critical UN resolutions and periodically issues bland statements lamenting the continued expansion of Israeli settlements on the Palestinian land the Jewish state has occupied since 1967. When Israel violates U.S. law, as it did in Lebanon by using American-made cluster bombs against civilian targets, a low-level official may issue a mild complaint. These fundamentals of the relationship go unchallenged by 95 percent of American politicians holding or running for national office.

Walt and Mearsheimer's goal was to ignite a conversation about the lobby—which they define expansively as an amorphous array of individuals, think tanks, and congressional lobbying groups that advocate Israeli perspectives—and its consequences, which they believe are damaging to America's core strategic interests in the Middle East. They support Israel's existence as a Jewish state, and while they readily summarize Israeli blemishes, drawing on Israeli sources and the arguments of the country's revisionist "new historians," they are fully aware that no modern state has been built without injustices. They seek a more normal United States relationship with Israel, rather like we have with France or Spain, and an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement that can start to drain the poison out of American relations with the Arab world.

At least in a preliminary sense, they have started a discussion. The initial working paper on the Kennedy School website was downloaded 275,000 times, throwing Israel's most ferocious partisans into a panic. Deploying a McCarthyite tactic, the

New York Sun quickly sought to link the authors to white supremacist David Duke. The New Republic published a basketful of hostile pieces. Several pro-Israel congressmen initiated an embarrassing effort—ignored by the institution's president—to get the Naval War College to cancel scheduled lectures by the two. In a column about "the Mearsheimer-Walt fiasco," neoconservative writer Daniel Pipes summed up his dilemma: it would have been better, Pipes said, to have ignored the essay by "two obscure academics" so that it disappeared "down the memory hole" instead of becoming "the monument that it now is." Pipes was wrong about this. Hostile reaction to the piece hadn't inspired a quarter of a million downloads. With the United States mired in a quagmire in Iraq, increasingly detested in the Muslim world, and wedded to an Israel policy that, beyond America's borders, seems bizarre to friend and foe alike, Walt and Mearsheimer had touched a topic that was crying out for serious analysis.

And the book could do more than the article. Arguments could be filled out, footnotes could be easily read. The 2006 Lebanon War—which saw the American Congress endorse the Israeli bombardment by the kind of margin that would satisfy Nicolae Ceausescu, while seeming genuinely puzzled that moderate Arab leaders did not join their applause—was analyzed as a test case. A book could continue the discussion and deepen it. But the book's enemies (how odd that a book could have enemies, but there is no better word for it) had time to prepare their ideological trenches, and within a month or two of publication, one could see the shape of the defense.

By the end of October, two months after The Israel Lobby appeared in stores, there had not been a single positive review in the mass-market media. For a long time it seemed that no editor dared trust the subject to a gentile, causing blogger Philip Weiss to ask cheekily, "Do the goyim get to register an Opinion Re Walt/Mearsheimer?" By then, the Wall Street Journal editorial page, the New York Sun, and The New Republic between them must have printed 25 attacks on Walt and Mearsheimer, virtually all of them designed to portray the authors as beyond the pale of rational discourse.

Anti-Semitism was not a credible charge. The authors make clear that the lobby isn't representative of the views of all or even most American Jews, and they support an Israel within recognized boundaries. Their recommendation that the United States treat Israel like a normal country is hard to demonize. Ditto their repeated assertions that lobbying is a perfectly normal part of the American system and that conflicted or divided loyalties have become commonplace in the modern world. But what many did was to discuss the book in a context of anti-Semitism, to convey the impression that The Israel Lobby was a deeply anti-Semitic book without explicitly saying so. Thus Jeffrey Goldberg, in a 6,000-word New Republic piece, introduced Walt and Mearsheimer after a detour through Osama bin Laden, Father Coughlin, Charles Lindbergh, and, of course, David Duke. He eventually called the book "the most sustained attack … against the political enfranchisement of American Jews since the era of Father Coughlin."

Samuel G. Freedman in the Washington Post opened his discussion of the book by invoking the New Testament concept of original sin, whose burden one can escape only through acceptance of Jesus Christ. A passage from Romans, Freedman claims, framed the book's argument—"if unintentionally." When was the last time [that] the Washington Post introduced a serious foreign affairs book with Bible talk that had no bearing on the work in question?

One of several Wall Street Journal attacks on the work claimed, "it is apparently the authors' position that ... [in the face of Arab lobbying efforts] American Jews are obliged to stay silent." This statement is more than a misrepresentation of Walt and Mearsheimer's argument, it is a flat-out lie. Did the editors who assigned and published the piece know this? Was discrediting the book so important that normal American journalistic standards had to be waived?

Another track of the demonization campaign was the repeated effort to cancel the authors' appearances or to demand that opposing speakers be invited to "rebut" their noxious views, a format hardly typical for authors on book tours. Unfortunately, these initiatives sometimes succeeded, as when the Chicago Council for Global Affairs cancelled an event at a venue where the two professors had spoken many times before. Some efforts to marginalize the book were more like parody, as when

Congressman Elliot Engel complained that Professor Mearsheimer had been invited to participate in a Columbia University forum on academic freedom.
It would be naïve to think that the campaign waged against the authors had no impact. It managed to muddy the debate about the book. Even on some of the wonkier Washington blogs, where there was manifest interest in contending with the book's arguments, the focus got shifted to whether The Israel Lobby was anti-Semitic. As one frustrated commenter on Ezra Klein's blog wrote, "[P]art of the theory is that the power of the 'lobby' is to effectively remove certain topics from the debate. And the closest we come to debating those topics is a meta-discussion of whether debating those topics is appropriate or some evidence of anti-semitism/self hating Jewry." Klein rued that "marginalizing the authors as anti-semitic is more effective than arguing back their viewpoint."
The barrage also had an intimidation effect, a sort of "shock and awe" for the political journalism set. What humble book-review editor could fail to be impressed by the sheer volume of rhetoric painting the book as disreputable or avoid wondering what bombs might explode under his own career if he asked former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft or Palestinian-American professor Rashid Khalidi to review the book. Television producers took note as well. While Mearsheimer managed an amiable ten minutes on "The Colbert Report," the authors got nowhere near the regular public-affairs discussion shows. Scholars and writers got the message: if men as esteemed in their field as Walt and Mearsheimer were subject to the Coughlin/Duke treatment and had their appearances cancelled, surely those less cushioned by tenure and eminence had good cause to keep silent. This probably explained the sheer ferocity of the campaign against The Israel Lobby.
Not all the negative reviews were as egregious as those cited above. But those that tried to address the substance of the book tended to land weak blows. Les Gelb's critique in the New York Times was representative. His central point was that if the Israel lobby—actually, he incorrectly claimed that Walt and Mearsheimer called it a "Jewish lobby"—was indeed so powerful, why has every American president over the past 40 years "privately favored" the return of the Palestinian territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state, and why has Washington consistently "expressed displeasure" at Israel's settlement expansion? This is precisely the question to which Walt and Mearsheimer provide an answer. If, as is indeed the case, most American presidents have "privately" sought Israeli withdrawal, and since Israel is extraordinarily dependent on American largesse, why has the United States never seriously put pressure on Israel to stop the settlements and give back the land? How did Israel manage to move 400,000 settlers into the West Bank in 40 years, often using American funds, if this was contrary to the wishes of every president? Gelb goes on to acknowledge that Walt and Mearsheimer were prescient in their opposition to Bush's Iraq folly, but asserts that the Israel lobby had nothing [to] do with the decision to go to war. Bush and Cheney needed no lobbying on this point, and they don't about Iran either.
This last area is easily the most disputed point between Walt and Mearsheimer and those reviewers who sought to answer their book rather than smear it. The Israel lobby, the two assert, helped drive the United States into Baghdad. It couldn't have done it by itself—that required 9/11 and Bush and Cheney. But, argue Mearsheimer and Walt, "absent the lobby's influence, there almost certainly would not have been a war. The lobby was a necessary but not sufficient condition for a war that is a strategic disaster for the United States."
This is a powerful polemical charge, if only because tens of millions of Americans who could care less who has sovereignty over the West Bank recognize that the Iraq War has been a painful failure on every level. But is it true? The Economist says the argument about Iraq "doesn't quite stand up," but might make sense if "neoconservatives and the Israel lobby were the same thing." Leonard Fein, who writes on the dovish Americans for Peace Now website, called the charge "monstrous" and accused the authors of treating the lobby and neoconservatives "as if the two are interchangeable." Are they?
On one aspect of the argument, the historical record is clear. The two authors do valuable service by documenting the near hysterical "attack Iraq now" recommendations made by various Israeli politicians to American audiences during the run-up to the war. Benjamin Netanyahu, whom the U.S. Congress customarily

treats with the kind of deference it might reserve for a Lincoln returned from the dead, warned senators and congressmen that Saddam was developing nukes that could be delivered in suitcases and satchels, and Shimon Peres told Americans that Saddam was as dangerous as bin Laden. The lobbying was so blatant that some political consultants warned Israel to cool it, lest Americans come to believe that the war in Iraq was waged "to protect Israel rather than to protect America." AIPAC, too, pushed for the invasion. It is clear that the Israel lobby, as everyone understands it, was part of the rush-to-war atmosphere that swept the capital in 2002.

But the critics do have a point: AIPAC and similar groups played a comparatively minor part in the frenzy. But what of the neoconservatives, who had openly pushed for war against Saddam since the late 1990s and who held several key posts in the Bush administration?

For Walt and Mearsheimer, neoconservatives are an integral part of the lobby, and indeed, for their argument to make sense, the lobby has to be defined broadly. Of course there is AIPAC, which exists to influence Congress, and its myriad associated groups that raise money for candidates. The recent emergence of Christian Zionism as an electoral force is an important addition, adding ethnic and social diversity and increased political weight to the lobby. This is a sociologically and psychologically rich area, which the authors don't explore as deeply as they might. What currents in American Protestantism suddenly made Israel so compelling? It is interesting to learn, for example, that in 1979, Menachem Begin gave Jerry Falwell a private jet as a gift and soon after bestowed upon him the Jabotinsky Medal for "outstanding achievement." (Other recipients include Elie Wiesel and Leon Uris.) But such facts, intriguing as they are, don't entirely speak for themselves. And whatever enhanced political clout Christian Zionism brought to the lobby, it did not include access and influence to inner decision-making sanctums of the Pentagon and White House or the ability to start a war.

That required the neoconservatives. The path that took the United States from 9/11 to Iraq has yet to be precisely documented, but it is generally accepted that Bush, Cheney, and other key policymakers became converts to neoconservative views after the attack, if they weren't already sympathetic. This is important because neoconservatism has a broad gravitational pull that more focused lobbying groups, no matter how effective, can never match.

It is one thing to motivate a senator or congressman to vote for "pro-Israel" legislation—and AIPAC does that well. The recent Kyl-Lieberman bill labeling Iran's military "terrorist" was reportedly first drafted by AIPAC, and an AIPAC aide's boast that he could have the signatures of 70 senators on a napkin within 24 hours was altogether believable.

But that kind of lobbying has obvious limitations. How many of those 70 senators would vote the lobby's way while discretely rolling their eyes, disliking the pressure they are subjected to but willing to go along because it is the course of least resistance? People don't start wars for such reasons.

Neoconservatism is something far more than advocacy of the interests of a foreign country. It is a full-blown ideological system, which shapes the way people interpret events and view their own society and its relation to the world. Yes, its foreign-policy views are strongly pro-Israel. The main shapers of neoconservatism would readily argue that their foreign-policy positions were good for Israel, while those they opposed imperiled the Jewish state. No one who has spent time with major neocons would doubt the centrality of Israel to their worldview or their attachment to the no-compromise-with-Arabs parts of the Israeli political spectrum. But such attitudes come embedded in a larger set of viewpoints, which are now fairly disseminated among the American elite. While it is one thing for a lawmaker to accommodate the Israel lobby over something like the Kyl-Lieberman bill, it is quite another for an executive-branch policymaker to see the world through a neocon perspective, to have fully internalized slogans like "moral clarity" and "Islamofascism" and "the lessons of appeasement" and elevated them as lodestars.

Neoconservatives did play a crucial role in preparing the Iraq War—in the press, in generating dubious intelligence conclusions and piping them into the executive branch, and in framing an argument that George Bush would be "surrendering" to terror if he didn't attack Iraq. It was a performance that more conventional lobbying organizations like AIPAC or the Zionist Organization of America couldn't match in

their wildest dreams. Walt and Mearsheimer don't go into this history deeply. (In The Assassin's Gate, New Yorker writer and author George Packer gives one of the most nuanced portraits of the attitudes of the Bush administration's intellectuals, exploring the difficult to pin down matter of how intellectuals' attitudes seep into policy choices.) But in view of their convictions and pivotal positions inside the executive branch and ability to shape policy at the very top, to say that neoconservatives "overlap" with the Israel lobby hardly does them justice: the faction might more properly be described as, to borrow the well-known phrase, the highest stage of the Israel lobby.

Moreover, as an ideological movement, neoconservatism has a reach that more focused pro-Israel advocacy could never duplicate. Does one call Donald Rumsfeld a neoconservative? Few do. While obviously quite capable, he isn't known as an intellectual, isn't Jewish (though of course not all neocons are Jewish), isn't an ex-liberal or leftist. He is usually described as a Republican "nationalist," though he pretty much delegated Iraq policy to men—Paul Wolfowitz, Doug Feith, and others—who fit most classical definitions of "neoconservative." But there are connections: in the 1980s Rumsfeld was enlisted by Midge Decter to chair the neoconservative Committee for the Free World, so certainly the neocon cast of mind was not unfamiliar to him. In short, just as the boundaries of the Israel lobby are blurry, so are those of neoconservatism. The revival of terms like "fellow traveler" would probably be helpful.

The most striking aspect of the reception of The Israel Lobby was the distance between the reviews in the U.S. and those abroad. In England, reviewers for the major papers (including the Murdoch-owned Times) treated the book's argument as self-evidently true. Geoffrey Wheatcroft, author of a prize-winning book on Zionism, noted in The Guardian that it must be obvious to a 12 year old that the Israel alliance, "far from advancing American interests, gravely damages them and has hindered every American endeavour in Arab countries or the whole Muslim world." Israel's most influential paper, Ha'aretz, ran a review by Daniel Levy, who was involved in the last serious round of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. He told his readers that Walt and Mearsheimer's most shrill detractors either had "not read the book, are emotionally incapable of dealing with harsh criticism of something they hold so close, or are intentionally avoiding substantive debate on the issue." Like others, Levy draws a line between the neocons and the Israel lobby proper and explains the Iraq War as a sort of perfect storm: Bush and Cheney, 9/11, many neoconservatives in the executive branch, and for the first time a Republican administration with Christian Zionists as a substantial part of its electoral base. He regrets that mainstream parts of the lobby have been co-opted by the neocons and closes with a plea for moderate Israelis to take American politics seriously and devote as much attention to forming American alliances as the Israeli Right does. This is very welcome advice, for Americans as well, because, as Walt and Mearsheimer stress (and Levy helpfully repeats), it is not Israel per se but Israel as an occupier that constitutes a major strategic liability for the United States.

But it should be noted that casual newspaper readers in Israel, in Britain, and soon in the rest of Europe, where the book is being translated into seven languages, are being treated to far more nuanced and serious discussion of The Israel Lobby than Americans have been.

At least there has been the blogosphere. One wouldn't know it from the major American newspapers or magazine reviews, but a fresh breeze is beginning to blow. The Israel Lobby did receive more attention on the serious blogs than any other book this year. M.J. Rosenberg, the director of policy analysis for Israel Policy Forum and a prominent "two-state solution" advocate, describes the influence of the book as enormous: "Capitol Hill staffers are talking about the book, everybody is arguing about it, people are intrigued. … it has opened up discussion."

Despite, or perhaps because of, ferocious attacks in The New Republic and the Wall Street Journal, The Israel Lobby made it onto the New York Times bestseller list. It remained there only a couple of weeks, soon displaced by Alan Greenspan's memoir and Laura Ingraham's latest. But the book's influence is still early in its trajectory. International sales will be large, there will be paperback editions, and the book will be assigned in course readings. The Israel Lobby will be around a long time, perhaps longer than AIPAC itself. Israeli peace activist Uri Avnery has already compared the work to Uncle Tom's Cabin, Philip Weiss to Rachel Carson's Silent

Spring. To build upon Tony Karon's analogy that glasnost is breaking out in the American Jewish community, and that younger Jews are questioning Israel like never before, The Gulag Archipelago didn't receive good reviews in Russia when it came out either.
Walt and Mearsheimer haven't written the last word on American-Israeli relations. Other books, more psychologically probing and more discursive, are in the works or waiting to be written. But in clearing the first path since the pivotal date of 9/11, these two authors have done their country a great service.

[12] Dokumentation der Botschaft in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente" dieser Homepage.

[13] Dokumentation der gemeinsamen Erklärung und Ansprachen Bushs, Abbas' und Olmerts in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente" sowie Kommentar „Meilenstein Annapolis" dieser Homepage.

[14] Arabisch „Hoffnung" bzw. Akronym für „Bataillone des libanesischen Widerstandes". Militärischer Flügel der 1959 von dem aus Iran stammenden Imam Musa Sadr gegründeten „Bewegung der Entrechteten" („harakat al-mahrumin").

[15] Steve Masters and Rob Levy: No Turning Back, in "Brit Tzedek v'Shalom – Jewish Alliance for Justice & Peace", Chicago, November 18, 2007:
If we support Annapolis rather than succumb to our skepticism, if we demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt to the White House, to Members of Congress,and to the presidential candidates that American Jews stand behind genuine peace efforts – we can change history.
Since our formation five and a half years ago, Brit Tzedek v'Shalom has been calling for active U.S. engagement to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We called for an international fund to bring the settlers home. We called for a Mideast peace envoy. We called for an international peace conference. The past six months excepted, our response from the Bush Administration has had an undeniable element of talking to a brick wall.
In response, we've sought out other ways to build political pressure for a two-state solution – by reaching out to more members of our community, to the media, and to our Representatives in Washington. While the Bush Administration was asleep at the wheel, Pro-Israel, Pro-Peace forces have been scoring bigger and bigger successes – most recently, with 135 Members of Congress signing the Ackerman-Boustany letter to Secretary Rice in support of Annapolis and with nearly 500 rabbinical signers (and climbing) to our Rabbinic Call on Annapolis and the Next President. The political climate is changing in our direction.
Now, we find the Bush Administration engaging in the kind of sustained, proactive diplomacy we've been calling for. We see Secretary Rice traveling back and forth to the region, meeting with Israeli and Palestinian leaders in genuine shuttle diplomacy. And we await the convening of an international "meeting" in Annapolis intended to re-launch serious Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.
Yet many in the Jewish community, in particular among peace advocates, have been utterly silent on Annapolis. Understandably, many feel a great deal of frustration and anger with the current Administration and are frankly doubtful that anything good can come of Annapolis.
However, if we support this latest effort rather than succumb to our skepticism, if we demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt to the White House, to Members of Congress, and to the presidential candidates that American Jews stand behind genuine peace efforts – we can change history.
Our voices need to ring out with a very clear message:

- We fully support the U.S., Israeli, and Palestinian governments as they launch the Annapolis meeting in an attempt to revive serious Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations towards a viable two-state solution.
- For Annapolis to be a success, it *must* be followed by genuine U.S. diplomatic engagement more intense and more involved than anything that has preceded it in the last seven years.
- Tangible improvements on the ground are vital, if the Israeli and Palestinian people are to support diplomatic efforts, at Annapolis or after. There

must be an increase in freedom of movement and access for Palestinians, and a freeze on settlement growth from the Israeli side; and stepped-up security, financial, and governmental reforms on the Palestinian side, with real efforts to put an end to the firing of Qassam rockets out of Gaza.

- Gaza cannot be ignored. Israel must do everything it can to achieve a ceasefire with Hamas and bring captured soldier Cpl. Gilad Shalit home. The humanitarian situation of Palestinians living in Gaza must be addressed, and Israel must stop threatening invasion or the cutoff of electricity.

The Pro-Israel, Pro-Peace grassroots have no choice but to offer one simple message: There can be no turning back.
There can be no turning back to the previous years of diplomatic neglect. No turning back to over-simplistic rhetoric that there is no Palestinian partner for peace. No turning back to the idea of unilateral withdrawal from some territories, combined with unilateral settlement expansion in others.
And if we're really serious about there being no turning back – we must give our full support to this Administration's efforts to move the peace process forward, regardless of our disagreements with its actions up till now.
The hard work will start the day after Annapolis. That's when the world will be watching to see how serious all the parties – Israeli, Palestinian, American – really are about peace. That's when American leaders will be judging just how much support they have from their constituencies, especially American Jews, for continuing down this difficult path.
Because we care about Israel, we must make the peace process that begins at Annapolis a success.
There is no turning back.
Steve Masters is the President of "Brit Tzedek v'Shalom". Rob Levy is "Brit Tzedek's" Washington Representative.

[16] Joint Jordanian-Syrian Communiqué, 18 November 2007
www.petra.gov.jo/nepras/2007/Nov/18/14000.htm;
www.petra.gov.jo/nepras/2007/Nov/18/15000.htm:
His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein and his brother His Excellency President Bashar Al-Assad, president of the Syrian Arab Republic held a summit meeting today in the Syrian capital Damascus.
The Summit came as part of both leaders' determination to strengthen and deepen cooperation between the two brotherly countries in all fields, and to reach practical and concrete solutions to various key bilateral issues. Moreover, both countries have an important role in strengthening Arab cooperation and protecting higher Arab interests in the face of regional challenges.
Bilateral issues of significance to both countries were also discussed during the summit meeting and agreement was reached on serious and effective solutions, especially on issues related to economic cooperation, water, borders, detainees and security.
Both leaders emphasized the importance of strengthening economic relations between the two countries and facilitating trade exchange while underscoring the importance of increasing bilateral trade towards higher levels. In this respect, several agreements have been marked for signature including an agreement to provide Jordan with its needs of wheat from brotherly Syria to be concluded during the next meeting of the Joint Jordanian-Syrian Higher Committee.
It has also been agreed to expedite the implementation of agreements signed between the two countries, especially with regards to both countries' shares in the Yarmouk River basin water.
On the issue of border delineation between the two countries, the two leaders agreed that the technical committees commence their work immediately to delineate the border and to continue their work in a serious and expeditious manner within a specific program and timeline.
Determined to strengthen the basis for security and stability in both countries, it was agreed that joint security committees immediately start addressing all pending security issues, and particularly those related to facilitating the flow of people between the two countries, border security and combating smuggling.
Both leaders issued their directives to their respective governments to convene a meeting of the Joint Jordanian-Syrian Higher Committee in theJordanian capital

Amman before the end of the year with the aim of signing bilateral agreements discussed, and to translate these agreements into programs and actions with specific timelines.
Determined to prejudice Arab interests in dealing with current challenges, both leaders expressed their commitment to work and coordinate with Arab leaders to establish a unified Arab position on Arab and regional issues in isolation of external interference, and on bases that safeguard higher Arab interests and the interests of both countries in confronting political and security challenges as well as radicalism and terrorism.
The two leaders expressed their keenness to intensify cooperation and coordination with Arab leaders to ensure the success of the Arab League Summit that will be held in the Syrian capital Damascus in 2008.
Both leaders stressed the importance of reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative and international resolutions that provide for the return of all occupied Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese land.
The two leaders expressed commitment to support Arab, Palestinian and international efforts to establish an independent Palestinian state on Palestinian soil with Jerusalem as its capital, within the framework of the peace process and the two-state solution.
Both leaders emphasized their full support for the Palestinian National Authority in its efforts to establish the Palestinian State and build its institutions; calling upon the Palestinian people to overcome their differences and unify their positions in order to protect the future of the Palestinian cause and the interests of the Palestinian people.
The two leaders also discussed the situation in Lebanon underlining their full respect to the sovereignty of Lebanon and denouncing all assassinations committed against the Lebanese people. Both leaders also rejected all foreign interference in Lebanon's internal affairs.
The two leaders underscored the need for Lebanon to reach consensus on the presidential elections within the Constitution and in a manner that would guarantee Lebanon's stability and preserve its national interests.
Both leaders stressed the importance of the positive role that Syria can play to ensure Lebanon's stability and security and build normal relations between Beirut and Damascus based on mutual respect that would serve the interests of both countries and their stability.
With regards to Iraq, His Majesty King Abdullah II and His Excellency President Bashar Al-Assad stressed the importance of the Arab role in supporting Iraq's unity, sovereignty and stability. Both leaders emphasized that solutions concerning the Iraqi problem should primarily come from within Iraq and in such a way that would fulfill the hopes and aspirations of the Iraqi people, and in isolation of any external influence that does not serve Iraqi interests.
Both leaders agreed to intensify their countries' efforts to support comprehensive national reconciliation in Iraq and to contribute to the success of the political process and reject all forms of sectarianism, violence and terrorism.
Both leaders reiterated their determination to strengthen coordination and consultation between Arab states to develop a unified Arab position in dealing with regional and international challenges. The two leaders stressed that dealing with these challenges requires major efforts by Arab leaderships to unify their positions, overcome their differences and agree on the future course of the Arab World, to ensure that the Arabs decide their own future and destiny.
Both leaders agreed to continue consultation and coordination between the two countries at various levels in order to ensure implementation of all agreed upon bilateral issues. They also agreed to maintain regular consultation and coordination on Arab and regional issues as part of their determination to ensure united Arab ranks and position.

[17] David Grossman's speech at the Rabin memorial, in „Haaretz"-online 06.11.2007: The annual memorial ceremony for Yitzhak Rabin is the moment when we pause for a while to remember Rabin the man, the leader. And we also take a look at ourselves, at Israeli society, its leadership, the national mood, the state of the peace process, at ourselves as individuals in the face of national events.

It is not easy to take a look at ourselves this year. There was a war, and Israel flexed its massive military muscle, but also exposed Israel's fragility. We discovered that our military might ultimately cannot be the only guarantee of our existence. Primarily, we have found that the crisis Israel is experiencing is far deeper than we had feared, in almost every way.
I am speaking here tonight as a person whose love for the land is overwhelming and complex, and yet it is unequivocal, and as one whose continuous covenant with the land has turned his personal calamity into a covenant of blood.
I am totally secular, and yet in my eyes the establishment and the very existence of the State of Israel is a miracle of sorts that happened to us as a nation – a political, national, human miracle. I do not forget this for a single moment. Even when many things in the reality of our lives enrage and depress me, even when the miracle is broken down to routine and wretchedness, to corruption and cynicism, even when reality seems like nothing but a poor parody of this miracle, I always remember.
And with these feelings, I address you tonight.
"Behold land, for we hath squandered," wrote the poet Saul Tchernikovsky in Tel Aviv in 1938. He lamented the burial of our young again and again in the soil of the Land of Israel. The death of young people is a horrible, ghastly waste.
But no less dreadful is the sense that for many years, the State of Israel has been squandering, not only the lives of its sons, but also its miracle; that grand and rare opportunity that history bestowed upon it, the opportunity to establish here a state that is efficient, democratic, which abides by Jewish and universal values; a state that would be a national home and haven, but not only a haven, also a place that would offer a new meaning to Jewish existence; a state that holds as an integral and essential part of its Jewish identity and its Jewish ethos, the observance of full equality and respect for its non-Jewish citizens.
Look at what befell us. Look what befell the young, bold, passionate country we had here, and how, as if it had undergone a quickened ageing process, Israel lurched from infancy and youth to a perpetual state of gripe, weakness and sourness.
How did this happen? When did we lose even the hope that we would eventually be able to live a different, better life? Moreover, how do we continue to watch from the side as though hypnotized by the insanity, rudeness, violence and racism that has overtaken our home?
And I ask you: How could it be that a people with such powers of creativity, renewal and vivacity as ours, a people that knew how to rise from the ashes time and again, finds itself today, despite its great military might, at such a state of laxity and inanity, a state where it is the victim once more, but this time its own victim, of its anxieties, its short-sightedness.
One of the most difficult outcomes of the recent war is the heightened realization that at this time there is no king in Israel, that our leadership is hollow. Our military and political leadership is hollow. I am not even talking about the obvious blunders in running the war, of the collapse of the home front, nor of the large-scale and small-time corruption.
I am talking about the fact that the people leading Israel today are unable to connect Israelis to their identity. Certainly not with the healthy, vitalizing and productive areas of this identity, with those areas of identity and memory and fundamental values that would give us hope and strength, that would be the antidote to the waning of mutual trust, of the bonds to the land, that would give some meaning to the exhausting and despairing struggle for existence.
The fundamental characteristics of the current Israeli leadership are primarily anxiety and intimidation, of the charade of power, the wink of the dirty deal, of selling out our most prized possessions. In this sense they are not true leaders, certainly they are not the leaders of a people in such a complicated position that has lost the way it so desperately needs. Sometimes it seems that the sound box of their self-importance, of their memories of history, of their vision, of what they really care for, exist only in the miniscule space between two headlines of a newspaper or between two investigations by the attorney general.
Look at those who lead us. Not all of them, of course, but many among them. Behold their petrified, suspicious, sweaty conduct. The conduct of advocates and scoundrels. It is preposterous to expect to hear wisdom emerge from them, that some vision or even just an original, truly creative, bold and ingenuous idea would emanate from them.

When was the last time a prime minister formulated or took a step that could open up a new horizon for Israelis, for a better future? When did he initiate a social or cultural or ideological move, instead of merely reacting feverishly to moves forced upon him by others?
Mister Prime Minister, I am not saying these words out of feelings of rage or revenge. I have waited long enough to avoid responding on impulse. You will not be able to dismiss my words tonight by saying a grieving man cannot be judged. Certainly I am grieving, but I am more pained than angry. This country and what you and your friends are doing to it pains me.
Trust me, your success is important to me, because the future of all of us depends on our ability to act. Yitzhak Rabin took the road of peace with the Palestinians, not because he possessed great affection for them or their leaders. Even then, as you recall, common belief was that we had no partner and we had nothing to discuss with them.
Rabin decided to act, because he discerned very wisely that Israeli society would not be able to sustain itself endlessly in a state of an unresolved conflict. He realized long before many others that life in a climate of violence, occupation, terror, anxiety and hopelessness, extracts a price Israel cannot afford. This is all relevant today, even more so. We will soon talk about the partner that we do or do not have, but before that, let us take a look at ourselves.
We have been living in this struggle for more than 100 years. We, the citizens of this conflict, have been born into war and raised in it, and in a certain sense indoctrinated by it. Maybe this is why we sometimes think that this madness in which we live for over 100 years is the only real thing, the only life for us, and that we do not have the option or even the right to aspire for a different life.
By our sword we shall live and by our sword we shall die and the sword shall devour forever. Maybe this would explain the indifference with which we accept the utter failure of the peace process, a failure that has lasted for years and claims more and more victims.
This could explain also the lack of reaction by most of us to the harsh blow to democracy caused by the appointment of Avigdor Lieberman as a senior minister with the support of the Labor Party – the appointment of a habitual pyromaniac as director of the nation's firefighters.
And these are partly the cause of Israel's quick descent into the heartless, essentially brutal treatment of its poor and suffering. This indifference to the fate of the hungry, the elderly, the sick and the disabled, all those who are weak, this equanimity of the State of Israel in the face of human trafficking or the appalling employment conditions of our foreign workers, which border on slavery, to the deeply ingrained institutionalized racism against the Arab minority.
When this takes place here so naturally, without shock, without protest, as though it were obvious, that we would never be able to get the wheel back on track, when all of this takes place, I begin to fear that even if peace were to arrive tomorrow, and even if we ever regained some normalcy, we may have lost our chance for full recovery.
The calamity that struck my family and myself with the falling of our son, Uri, does not grant me any additional rights in the public discourse, but I believe that the experience of facing death and the loss brings with it a sobriety and lucidity, at least regarding the distinction between the important and the unimportant, between the attainable and the unattainable.
Any reasonable person in Israel, and I will say in Palestine too, knows exactly the outline of a possible solution to the conflict between the two peoples. Any reasonable person here and over there knows deep in their heart the difference between dreams and the heart's desire, between what is possible and what is not possible by the conclusion of negotiations. Anyone who does not know, who refuses to acknowledge this, is already not a partner, be he Jew or Arab, is entrapped in his hermetic fanaticism, and is therefore not a partner.
Let us take a look at those who are meant to be our partners. The Palestinians have elected Hamas to lead them, Hamas who refuses to negotiate with us, refuses even to recognize us. What can be done in such a position? Keep strangling them more and more, keep mowing down hundreds of Palestinians in Gaza, most of whom are innocent civilians like us? Kill them and get killed for all eternity?

Turn to the Palestinians, Mr. Olmert, address them over the heads of Hamas, appeal to their moderates, those who like you and I oppose Hamas and its ways, turn to the Palestinian people, speak to their deep grief and wounds, acknowledge their ongoing suffering.
Nothing would be taken away from you or Israel's standing in future negotiations. Our hearts will only open up to one another slightly, and this has a tremendous power, the power of a force majeur. The power of simple human compassion, particularly in this a state of deadlock and dread. Just once, look at them not through the sights of a gun, and not behind a closed roadblock. You will see there a people that is tortured no less than us. An oppressed, occupied people bereft of hope.
Certainly, the Palestinians are also to blame for the impasse, certainly they played their role in the failure of the peace process. But take a look at them from a different perspective, not only at the radicals in their midst, not only at those who share interests with our own radicals. Take a look at the overwhelming majority of this miserable people, whose fate is entangled with our own, whether we like it or not.
Go to the Palestinians, Mr. Olmert, do not search all the time for reasons for not to talk to them. You backed down on the unilateral convergence, and that's a good thing, but do not leave a vacuum. It will be occupied instantly with violence, destruction. Talk to them, make them an offer their moderates can accept. They argue among themselves far more than we are shown in the media. Make them an offer that will force them to choose between accepting it or prefering to remain hostage to fanatical Islam.
Approach them with the bravest and most serious plan Israel can offer. With the offer than any reasonable Palestinian and Israeli knows is the boundary of their refusal and our concession. There is no time. Should you delay, in a short while we will look back with longing at the amateur Palestinian terror. We will hit our heads and yell at our failure to exercise all of our mental flexibility, all of the Israeli ingenuity to uproot our enemies from their self-entrapment. We have no choice and they have no choice. And a peace of no choice should be approached with the same determination and creativity as one approaches a war of no choice. And those who believe we do have a choice, or that time is on our side do not comprehend the deeply dangerous processes already in motion.
Maybe, Mr. Prime Minister, you need to be reminded, that if an Arab leader is sending a peace signal, be it the slightest and most hesitant, you must accept it, you must test immediately its sincerity and seriousness. You do not have the moral right not to respond.
You owe it to those whom you would ask to sacrifice their lives should another war break out. Therefore, if President Assad says that Syria wants peace, even if you don't believe him, and we are all suspicious of him, you must offer to meet him that same day.
Don't wait a single day. When you launched the last war you did not even wait one hour. You charged with full force, with the complete arsenal, with the full power of destruction. Why, when a glimmer of peace surfaces, must you reject it immediately, dissolve it? What have you got to lose? Are you suspicious of it? Go and offer him such terms that would expose his schemes. Offer him a peace process that would last over several years, and only at its conclusion, and provided he meets all the conditions and restrictions, will he get back the Golan. Commit him to a prolonged process, act so that his people also become aware of this possibility. Help the moderates, who must exist there as well. Try to shape reality. Not only serve as its collaborator. This is what you were elected to do.
Certainly, not all depends on our actions. There are major powers active in our region and in the world. Some, like Iran, like radical Islam, seek our doom and despite that, so much depends on what we do, on what we become.
Disagreements today between right and left are not that significant. The vast majority of Israel's citizens understand this already, and know what the outline for the resolution of the conflict would look like. Most of us understand, therefore, that the land would be divided, that a Palestinian state would be established.
Why, then, do we keep exhausting ourselves with the internal bickering that has gone on for 40 years? Why does our political leadership continue to reflect the position of the radicals and not that held by the majority of the public? It is better to

reach national consensus before circumstances or God forbid another war force us to reach it. If we do it, we would save ourselves years of decline and error, years when we will cry time and again: "Behold land, for we hath squandered."
From where I stand right now, I beseech, I call on all those who listen, the young who came back from the war, who know they are the ones to be called upon to pay the price of the next war, on citizens, Jew and Arab, people on the right and the left, the secular, the religious, stop for a moment, take a look into the abyss. Think of how close we are to losing all that we have created here. Ask yourselves if this is not the time to get a grip, to break free of this paralysis, to finally claim the lives we deserve to live. *Translated by Orr Scharf.*

[18] **Platform of the 13th Government**, July 2007

(Speaker's office) and PLC members,

Greetings

In accordance with the Basic Law and the applicable Palestinian laws and presidential decrees, as well as constitutional rules and traditions, I hereby present the 13th Palestinian government's platform. This government came about following the expiry of the state of emergency and the issuance of a presidential decree on July 13, 2007, in which the Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee, President of the National Authority, asked that the 12th government continue functioning as a care-taker government and to carry out the assigned duties.
And whereas the President has tasked us with forming the new government (which would be the 13th Palestinian government) to work in accordance with a political platform that shall accomplish the high interests of our Arab Palestinian people, and based on the text and content of the presidential decree, our government platform shall be based on the following principles:

- The government shall abide by President Abbas's political platform, which is based on the Palestinian national program, including the Palestinian peace platform, and the Declaration of Independence in 1988 issued by the Palestinian National Council in its 18th session, and on the Arab Peace Initiative, as well as all pertinent international resolutions. The government views peace not only as a strategic option, but also as a necessity dictated by the current political circumstances as well as by the current state of international relations and obligations which determine that the Palestinian people must embrace an open foreign policy; one that is in harmony with the legitimacies of the Palestinian, Arab and international stances.
- To fully abide by the bilateral and multilateral agreements signed by the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and the Palestinian National Authority, including those agreements signed with Israel.
- To enhance democratic practices, and to work on implementing and exercising them comprehensively by the National Authority, political factions, and social and economic forces in Palestine.
- To fully abide by professional criteria and impartiality upon selecting members of our cabinet, and while filling all other key positions in the Authority, in accordance with the law.
- To preserve the unity of the Palestinian people among all its social and political segments as a prerequisite to enhancing the steadfastness on their national soil and accomplishing their goals.
- To abide by principles of good governance and to pursue reforms on the path of building the state of law and institutions.

The Government's goals:

- To end the occupation and to create our independent state – with holy Jerusalem as its capital – on all the Palestinian lands occupied in 1967, based on the principles and terms of the 1988 Declaration of Independence, and to find a just and agreed upon solution to the issue of refugees on the basis of resolution 194. To work on ending settlement activities, the separation wall, and to remove all material and political impediments which constitute real obstacles hindering the accomplishment of these goals.
- To work on reinstalling effective control of the legitimate authority in the entire Gaza Strip, and to restore the unity of the wounded homeland – that faced conspiracies, aggression and a violent take-over of the Authority and its

institutions. This matter continues to pose a threat to the unity of the homeland and the national traditions of the Palestinian people.

- To support the city of Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the Palestinian people and its economic and cultural status in addition to its sublime religious standing. Our government shall work to provide all means of support to revive the political, cultural and economic status of Jerusalem through revitalization of its institutions and economy by creating jobs, construction of housing units, and by improving the competitiveness of its services and products. This is liable to enhance the residents of Jerusalem steadfastness while confronting the schemes of settlements activities and migration. The government shall seize all opportunities to preserve Jerusalem, and enable it to restore its historic status as it was throughout the ages i.e., a city of peace, tolerance and worship open to indigenous Palestinians, and all human beings without neither walls nor roadblocks.
- To deliver security and safety as most pressing priorities. Accomplishing these would be the only way to enhance rule of law, restore confidence in the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian economy. Therefore, the government pledges to end the state of security chaos, lawlessness and armed activities while upholding the policy of "one gun, one authority"; and to enforce law and order, and to provide security to the Palestinian citizens, foreign workers and the guests of the Palestinian people.
- To focus development and economic efforts on combating poverty, alleviating unemployment and economic recession, and to provide necessary funds to do so from all possible resources, and to promote the management of development projects while transparently coordinating and directing assistance towards our national priorities accomplish our goals; and to coordinate such efforts with professional syndicates, and economic institutions and representatives of private sector in order to achieve the objectives of balanced socio-economic development.
- To carefully cater for political prisoners in Israeli jails, and to alleviate their suffering and that of their families. This file will remain a high priority on the government's agenda which will seek to secure their release, and to meet their living needs and to secure decent livelihood for their families while facilitating their quick integration in society. The government also pledges to meet the needs of the families of the martyrs and the wounded.
- To enhance the rule of law and preserve the judicial system's independent standing, and to provide all needed human and financial resources to that end in order to enforce the principle of rule of law and to justice.
- To combat corruption, nepotism and favoritism and to provide equal opportunities in filling government positions, away from factional considerations, and to pay attention to the individuals with special needs in terms of their entitlement to be employed in government positions.
- To pay special attention to the situation and needs of the refugee camps at the economic, health and cultural levels and to provide assistance in delivering the best level of services while improving their living conditions.
- To promote agricultural activities and to protect agricultural products by providing markets; and securing other means of support, including increasing agricultural lands and protecting these against the ongoing settlement expansion, and to cater to the needs of the Jordan valley area and lands behind the wall and by protecting water resources and preventing irrational use of irrigation water.
- To promote the concept and practice of "good citizenship," as one based on responsibility and commitment to the high national interests while enhancing enfranchisement in the context of a comprehensive development framework.
- To preserve human rights, and protect public freedom and individual liberties. To protect freedom of expression and respect of views and counter views and to enhance concepts of tolerance, including religious tolerance, principles of political, cultural and intellectual pluralism while being open towards others people's cultures and creativity.
- To build a clear cut strategy to fight all practices centered on accusing "others" of atheism and/or treason. To combat the exploitation of religion to achieve political gains by groups or individuals, and to enhance the status of

Islam as a religion of tolerance and moderation while preventing the use of Islam to justify killings, exclusion of others and destruction.

- To achieve equality between men and women in all domains and to preserve women's political, social, economic and legal achievements. The leading role of the Palestinian women in the national struggle compels the government to fully support women and enhance their participation in all walks of life i.e., political, social and economic. In this context, the government realizes the significant role of the Palestinian family and shall work to enhance the role of the Palestinian family in the process of upbringing of children so as to build a society free of social and cultural diseases.
- To double the attention and focus on the youth sector and to provide job opportunities to this sector inside the homeland to enable the youth to contribute to the building of the independent Palestinian State.
- To specially cater to the needs of marginalized groups to enable them to be involved in the economic, social and cultural activities and to provide effective social safety nets for these groups.
- To pay attention to the cultural centers and activities and to support the role and activities of artists, and journalist based on keen interest in the efforts exerted by these groups to achieve the national goals of the Palestinian society while confronting the forces of backwardness and darkness.
- To enhance relations with civil society organizations and to build true partnership with them in the various sectors.
- To preserve the environment and work to protect the cultural and natural heritage in Palestine.
- To promote medical and health services in all areas and at all levels. To focus on promoting primary health care services and promoting the qualitative productivity of these services. The government shall work on promoting specialized medical services and providing the needed infrastructure and equipment to eliminate the use of external hospital referrals for medical treatment.
- To promote education qualitatively and quantitatively and to provide the needed funding and human resources to that end. To promote the educational curricula to meet the modern standards and to confront isolationist tendencies, primitiveness and backwardness. To support universities and other academic institutions and research centers in order to develop an enlightened Palestinian citizen capable of employing knowledge and modern technology in all domains.
- In order to achieve these goals, the government will put forth and implement “an Urgent Economic Revival Plan” for the upcoming six moths, and to delineate a long term vision for the building of the independent state and prepare a medium term plan for the years 2008-2010. The urgent plan for the next six months includes the following components:

- A general budget for the remaining months of the year 2007 and to work on providing sufficient revenues to pay the salaries regularly and to settle outstanding dues of the employees and to settle outstanding bills owed by the government to the private sector to the maximum extent possible.
- To put forth a plan to provide an emergency / humanitarian relief to our people in the Gaza Strip which would include food, medications and other essential needs.
- The urgent development plan will include completion of all pending and suspended infrastructure projects i.e., electricity, roads etc. And also to provide urgently the needs in the health and education sectors. This will include packages of projects that aim at reviving the private sector, reform oriented projects, including the judicial system and institutional development of the government ministries and agencies.
- On a medium term basis, the government shall put forth a national program to build the economy and the institutions of the independent Palestinian state starting with developing a realistic and sound development vision that would determine the identity and quality of the aspired Palestinian economy and specify its status regionally and internationally. This program will be implemented on a medium term basis i.e. 2008-2010 and will be built on integrating the development plan into the general budget. This will be accomplished through full participation of all government ministries and agencies along with private sector firms and civil

society organizations to guarantee consensus and commitment to meeting the interests of the partners in this development process. This shall be the right prelude to transform the Palestinian economy to a state of sustainable development which takes into account the rights of future generations. We shall see to it that this plan be responsive to the development priorities in all sectors.
Lastly, allow me to stress the importance of strengthening brotherly relations between the Palestinian people and the Arab and foreign countries. These relations are real accomplishments that must be preserved and never endangered. The government pledges not to interfere in the internal affairs of any other country and not to be part of an alliance or axis against any country. The government will be keen on expanding the circle of supporters in order to restore our rights. The government shall work on activating diplomatic work and providing means of success for such efforts to increase our friends and cement Palestine's relations at the Arab, Islamic and international levels and to identify our external priorities based on our high national interests.
The creation of the State of Palestine is a Palestinian demand as well as an Arab quest, that enjoys wide international support. The government will work tirelessly and persistently in all arenas to enhance Arab, Islamic and international solidarity for our struggle and to achieve international consensus on the necessity to implement pertinent international resolutions, and to give the Arab Peace Initiative the ample opportunity in order to be the platform to achieve a comprehensive peace to end the decades-long bloody conflict and to end the state of war which exhausted the peoples of the region.
Members of the Council,
While presenting the platform of the new government, I should not fail to highlight the role of the previous government which was tasked with enforcing the state of emergency under difficult and complex political and security circumstances due to the coup against legitimacy in the Gaza Strip and the subsequent aggressions against the legitimate institutions and employees as well as the destruction of what was built by the Palestinian people, and violations of all legitimate rights. Despite this, the government was able to provide for flow of funds, humanitarian needs including foodstuffs, medication, electricity, water and other essential needs to our people in the Gaza Strip. The government was also able for the first time in more than 15 months to pay the salaries in full to all employees. The government settled part of the outstanding dues to the employees and the private sector which restored confidence in the government and its ability to function and to meet its commitments. The government succeeded in ending the political and financial siege and in resuming the flow of funds and development activities. Finally, the government embarked on implementing a security plan that should ensure the capacity of the security establishment in carrying out its main duty in providing security and protection to the citizens and safeguarding the national program and aspirations.
As we highlight the content of the letter of designation, I hope that you will approve giving the 13th government confidence to enable it to carry out its duties under these critical circumstances.
Thank you for your cooperation and May God bless you;
Ramallah
July 22, 2007
Salam Fayyad
Prime Minister Designate
The 13 Government

[19] President Bush Discusses the Middle East, Washington, D.C., June 16, 2007, via www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/07/print/20070716-7.html:
THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon. In recent weeks, debate in our country has rightly focused on the situation in Iraq – yet Iraq is not the only pivotal matter in the Middle East. More than five years ago, I became the first American President to call for the creation of a Palestinian state. In the Rose Garden, I said that Palestinians should not have to live in poverty and occupation. I said that the Israelis should not have to live in terror and violence. And I laid out a new vision for the future – two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security.

Since then, many changes have come – some hopeful, some dispiriting. Israel has taken difficult actions, including withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the West Bank. Palestinians have held free elections, and chosen a president committed to peace. Arab states have put forward a plan that recognizes Israel's place in the Middle East. And all these parties, along with most of the international community, now share the goal of a peaceful, democratic Palestinian state – a level of consensus never before seen on this crucial issue.

The past five years have also brought developments far too familiar in the recent history of the region. Confronted with the prospect of peace, extremists have responded with acts of aggression and terror. In Gaza, Hamas radicals betrayed the Palestinian people with a lawless and violent takeover. By its actions, Hamas has demonstrated beyond all doubt that it is [more] devoted to extremism and murder than to serving the Palestinian people.

This is a moment of clarity for all Palestinians. And now comes a moment of choice. The alternatives before the Palestinian people are stark. There is the vision of Hamas, which the world saw in Gaza – with murderers in black masks, and summary executions, and men thrown to their death from rooftops. By following this path, the Palestinian people would guarantee chaos, and suffering, and the endless perpetuation of grievance. They would surrender their future to Hamas's foreign sponsors in Syria and Iran. And they would crush the possibility of any – of a Palestinian state.

There's another option, and that's a hopeful option. It is the vision of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad; it's the vision of their government; it's the vision of a peaceful state called Palestine as a homeland for the Palestinian people. To realize this vision, these leaders are striving to build the institutions of a modern democracy. They're working to strengthen the Palestinian security services, so they can confront the terrorists and protect the innocent. They're acting to set up competent ministries that deliver services without corruption. They're taking steps to improve the economy and unleash the natural enterprise of the Palestinian people. And they're ensuring that Palestinian society operates under the rule of law. By following this path, Palestinians can reclaim their dignity and their future – and establish a state of their own.

Only the Palestinians can decide which of these courses to pursue. Yet all responsible nations have a duty to help clarify the way forward. By supporting the reforms of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad, we can help them show the world what a Palestinian state would look like – and act like. We can help them prove to the world, the region, and Israel that a Palestinian state would be a partner – not a danger. We can help them make clear to all Palestinians that rejecting violence is the surest path to security and a better life. And we can help them demonstrate to the extremists once and for all that terror will have no place in a Palestinian state.

So in consultation with our partners in the Quartet – the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations – the United States is taking a series of steps to strengthen the forces of moderation and peace among the Palestinian people.

First, we are strengthening our financial commitment. Immediately after President Abbas expelled Hamas from the Palestinian government, the United States lifted financial restrictions on the Palestinian Authority that we had imposed. This year, we will provide the Palestinians with more than $190 million in American assistance – including funds for humanitarian relief in Gaza. To build on this support, I recently authorized the Overseas Private Investment Corporation to join in a program that will help generate $228 million in lending to Palestinian businesses. Today, I announce our intention to make a direct contribution of $80 million to help Palestinians reform their security services – a vital effort they're undertaking with the guidance of American General Keith Dayton. We will work with Congress and partners around the world to provide additional resources once a plan to build Palestinian institutions is in place. With all of this assistance, we are showing the Palestinian people that a commitment to peace leads to the generous support of the United States.

Second, we're strengthening our political and diplomatic commitment. Again today, President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert sat down together to discuss priorities and resolve issues. Secretary Rice and I have strongly supported these meetings, and she has worked with both parties to sketch out a "political horizon" for a

Palestinian state. Now we will intensify these efforts, with the goal of increasing the confidence of all parties in a two-state solution. And we will continue to deliver a firm message to Hamas: You must stop Gaza from being a safe haven for attacks against Israel. You must accept the legitimate Palestinian government, permit humanitarian aid in Gaza, and dismantle militias. And you must reject violence, and recognize Israel's right to exist, and commit to all previous agreements between the parties. As I said in the Rose Garden five years ago, a Palestinian state will never be created by terror.

Third, we're strengthening our commitment to helping build the institutions of a Palestinian state. Last month, former Prime Minister – British Prime Minister Tony Blair agreed to take on a new role as Quartet representative. In this post, he will coordinate international efforts to help the Palestinians establish the institutions of a strong and lasting free society – including effective governing structures, a sound financial system, and the rule of law. He will encourage young Palestinians to participate in the political process. And America will strongly support his work to help Palestinian leaders answer their people's desire to live in peace.

All the steps I've outlined are designed to lay the foundation for a successful Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza – a nation with functioning political institutions and capable security forces, and leaders who reject terror and violence. With the proper foundation, we can soon begin serious negotiations toward the creation of a Palestinian state.

These negotiations must resolve difficult questions and uphold clear principles. They must ensure that Israel is secure. They must guarantee that a Palestinian state is viable and contiguous. And they must lead to a territorial settlement, with mutually agreed borders reflecting previous lines and current realities, and mutually agreed adjustments. America is prepared to lead discussions to address these issues, but they must be resolved by Palestinians and Israelis, themselves.

Resolving these issues would help show Palestinians a clear way forward. And ultimately, it could lead to a final peace in the Middle East – a permanent end to the conflict, and an agreement on all the issues, including refugees and Jerusalem.

To make this prospect a reality, the Palestinian people must decide that they want a future of decency and hope – not a future of terror and death. They must match their words denouncing terror with action to combat terror.

The Palestinian government must arrest terrorists, dismantle their infrastructure, and confiscate illegal weapons as the road map requires. They must work to stop attacks on Israel, and to free the Israeli soldier held hostage by extremists. And they must enforce the law without corruption, so they can earn the trust of their people, and of the world. Taking these steps will enable the Palestinians to have a state of their own. And there's only way to end the conflict, and nothing less is acceptable.

Israel has a clear path. Prime Minister Olmert must continue to release Palestinian tax revenues to the government of Prime Minster Fayyad. Prime Minister Olmert has also made clear that Israel's future lies in developing areas like the Negev and Galilee – not in continuing occupation of the West Bank. This is a reality that Prime Minister Sharon recognized, as well. So unauthorized outposts should be removed and settlement expansion ended. At the same time, Israelis should find other practical ways to reduce their footprint without reducing their security -- so they can help President Abbas improve economic and humanitarian conditions. They should be confident that the United States will never abandon its commitment to the security of Israel as a Jewish state and homeland for the Jewish people.

The international community must rise to the moment, and provide decisive support to responsible Palestinian leaders working for peace. One forum to deliver that support is the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee – a group chaired by Norway that includes the United States and Japan, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan. Today I call for a session of this committee to gather soon, so that the world can back its words in real support for the new Palestinian government.

The world can do more to build the conditions for peace. So I will call together an international meeting this fall of representatives from nations that support a two-state solution, reject violence, recognize Israel's right to exist, and commit to all previous agreements between the parties. The key participants in this meeting will be the Israelis, the Palestinians, and their neighbors in the region. Secretary Rice

will chair the meeting. She and her counterparts will review the progress that has been made toward building Palestinian institutions. They will look for innovative and effective ways to support further reform. And they will provide diplomatic support for the parties in their bilateral discussions and negotiations, so that we can move forward on a successful path to a Palestinian state.
Arab states have a pivotal role to play, as well. They should show strong support for President Abbas's government and reject the violent extremism of Hamas. They should use their resources to provide much-needed assistance to the Palestinian people. Nations like Jordan and Egypt, which are natural gateways for Palestinian exports, should open up trade to create opportunities on both sides of the border. Arab nations should also take an active part in promoting peace negotiations. Re-launching the Arab League initiative was a welcome first step. Now Arab nations should build on this initiative – by ending the fiction that Israel does not exist, stopping the incitement of hatred in their official media, and sending cabinet-level visitors to Israel. With all these steps, today's Arab leaders can show themselves to be the equals of peacemakers like Anwar Sadat and King Hussein of Jordan.
The conflict in Gaza and the West Bank today is a struggle between extremists and moderates. And these are not the only places where the forces of radicalism and violence threaten freedom and peace. The struggle between extremists and moderates is also playing out in Lebanon – where Hezbollah and Syria and Iran are trying to destabilize the popularly elected government. The struggle is playing out in Afghanistan – where the Taliban and al Qaeda are trying to roll back democratic gains. And the struggle is playing out in Iraq -- where al Qaeda, insurgents, and militia are trying to defy the will of nearly 12 million Iraqis who voted for a free future.
Ceding any of these struggles to extremists would have deadly consequences for the region and the world. So in Gaza and the West Bank and beyond, the international community must stand with the brave men and women who are working for peace.
Recent days have brought a chapter of upheaval and uncertainty in the Middle East. But the story does not have to end that way. After the wave of killing by Hamas last month, a 16-year-old girl in Gaza City told a reporter, "The gunmen want to destroy the culture of our fathers and grandfathers. We will not allow them to do it." She went on, "I'm saying it's enough killing. Enough."
That young woman speaks for millions – in Gaza, the West Bank, in Israel, in Arab nations, and in every nation. And now the world must answer her call. We must show that in the face of extremism and violence, we stand on the side of tolerance and decency. In the face of chaos and murder, we stand on the side of law and justice. And in the face of terror and cynicism and anger, we stand on the side of peace in the Holy Land.
Thank you.

[20] Talia Sasson: A vow in vain, in “Haaretz”-online 31.05.2007:
A law proposed by Yisrael Beiteinu MK David Rotem, and which has passed its first reading in the Knesset, ostensibly deals with a minor matter – a change in the wording of the swearing-in oath elected Knesset members take when taking office. However, this proposal, if it becomes law, is liable to have serious implications.
The current oath reads: "I swear to be loyal to the State of Israel and to fulfill in good faith my mission in the Knesset." Under the proposed law, an elected member would be required to take the following vow: "I swear to be loyal to the Jewish and democratic state of Israel, its values and its symbols and to fulfill in good faith my mission in the Knesset."
It appears that the purpose of the proposal is to strengthen the Jewish character of the State of Israel by preventing the swearing-in of anyone who is not prepared to commit himself to the State of Israel as a Jewish entity. In fact, its aim is to portray the Arab members of the Knesset as a group opposed to the existence of Israel in its current form and to sabotage their ability to function as members of the Knesset. The result of the proposal could be dangerous to Israel on various levels. Moreover, it will also miss its original target and weaken Israel's status as a Jewish state.
The proposed vow would likely cause Knesset members who represent the Arab public in Israel to refrain from taking the oath altogether because of the difficulty inherent in it for them. The direct legal-constitutional outcome of not taking the oath

is the denial of the Knesset member's rights. The deprivation of such rights brings up constitutional questions, but it does not appear that the Knesset member would be prevented from fulfilling his parliamentary role.
Still, it appears that the main damage this proposal would cause is the sense of segregation and alienation it is liable to arouse in the Arab public, as it would contribute to the expansion of the gap between the Jewish and Arab communities and prevent members of the Arab public from participating in Knesset elections. And indeed, it is in the interest of every citizen who believes in the importance of Israel's existence as a democracy that the entire voting public participate in elections. Abstaining from such, especially in a national-ethnic context, severely damages the democratic nature of the State of Israel and its image as a democracy.
Undermining the trust in the Israeli democratic regime – especially because of the discrimination against Arabs – will lead to Israel's isolation in the world, its alienation and even hatred of it. It could also encourage those who want to question its right to exist to do exactly that.
Weakening the public's faith in the democratic character of Israel, both at home and abroad, will ultimately also damage the legitimacy of its Jewish character, which will appear to be irreconcilable with Israel's democratic character. The one will appear to come at the expense of the other, and indeed this has already happened as is implied by the proposed law.
Anyone who supports this proposal will lose out. The law will not help strengthen the country's Jewish character, but will raise debate over the legitimacy of its Jewishness. Anyone who wants to support the Jewish and democratic Israel and to strengthen its existence as a legitimate and accepted state among the countries of the world should completely reject this proposed law, which would bring no benefit, only harm.
The author was the head of the special tasks department at the State Prosecutor's Office.

[21] Aluf Benn: PM mulls resuming Syria peace talks via 3rd party, in “Haaretz”-online 31.05.2007:
Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is exploring, via a third party, the possibility of resuming peace talks with Syria.
A government source said there was no direct contact between Israeli and Syrian officials, "but a very serious assessment is underway."
What is being assessed is what Israel would get in return for pulling out of the Golan Heights, the nature of future bilateral relations and whether Syria would consider cutting its ties with Iran, Hezbollah and Palestinian terror organizations, Israel's main enemies in the region.
Olmert has recently referred to the possible resumption of talks with Syria in closed meetings. "The price is clear. There may be a debate on the payment terms, discounts etc. but the main question is what Israel would receive in return. Will it receive peace like [the one it has] with Egypt, peace like Britain and France have, or a deception: Give us the Golan, and all you'll get is an alliance between Syria and Iran and Hamas headquarters in Damascus," he said.
Olmert was persuaded to reexamine the Syrian option mainly by the numerous warnings that Syria's army was gaining strength and the danger of an eruption of hostilities in the North.
Olmert sent several messages to Damascus, warning Assad of a "miscalculation" that would lead to an unnecessary clash between the two countries.
However, he also wishes to examine the option of negotiating with the Syrians, to show in the case of a crisis that Israel had tried to prevent it.
"My duty as prime minister is to examine [the negotiations option] even if intelligence evaluations say it's a deception and even when Western and other leaders warn me," Olmert said in the closed meetings.
Publicly, Olmert's attitude toward the Syrians has remained cool. Yesterday he told a U.S. Congress committee, "I'm interested in making peace with Syria and it appears that the present Syrian regime, which supports terror, is not interested in reaching an agreement."
Israel conducted peace negotiations with Syria for about nine years, from 1991 to 2000, under five prime ministers: Yitzhak Shamir, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres,

Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak. Israel agreed in the talks to pull out of the entire Golan Heights, and Syria agreed to hold diplomatic ties and security arrangements including American observers on the early-warning station on Mount Hermon.
The talks snagged over the control of the Kinneret's northeastern coastline. Syrian President Bashar Assad has offered to resume peace talks in recent months, while at once threatening to take the Golan Heights back by force.
Olmert objected to the talks at first, pinning his position on the American objection and Syria's support of terror. Later, however, he decided to examine Damascus' intentions.

[22] Quartet Statement, May 30, 2007:
The Quartet Principals – Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, High Representative for European Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner – met today in Berlin to discuss the situation in the Middle East.
The Quartet expressed its deep concern over recent factional violence in Gaza. It called for all Palestinians to immediately renounce all acts of violence and respect the ceasefire. It called upon the Palestinian Authority government, in cooperation with President Abbas and regional actors, to do everything necessary to restore law and order, including the release of kidnapped BBC journalist Alan Johnston.
The Quartet strongly condemned the continued firing of Qassam rockets into Southern Israel as well as the buildup of arms by Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza. It endorsed PA President Abbas' call for an immediate end to such violence, and called upon all elements of the PA government and all Palestinian groups to cooperate with President Abbas to that end. The Quartet called for the immediate and unconditional release of Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit. The Quartet urged Israel to exercise restraint to ensure that its security operations avoid civilian casualties or damage to civilian infrastructure. It noted that the detention of elected members of the Palestinian government and legislature raises particular concerns and called for them to be released. The Quartet noted its support for the May 30 th Security Council Press Statement on the breakdown of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.
The Quartet welcomed continued dialogue between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas, including bilateral summits, and expressed support for U.S. efforts to effect progress on security and movement and access issues. The Quartet agreed that movement and access are essential and in this regard called on both parties to implement fully the Movement and Access Agreement of 15 November 2005. The Quartet urged the parties to work positively and constructively in order to build confidence and to create an environment conducive to progress on the political horizon for Palestinian statehood, consistent with the Roadmap and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, which should also be addressed in these bilateral discussions. Palestinians must know that their state will be viable, and Israelis must know a future state of Palestine will be a source of security, not a threat.
The Quartet commended the excellent work of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) and endorsed its extension for three months from July until September 2007. It called on donors to follow through on past pledges of support. The Quartet noted that the resumption of transfers of tax and customs revenues collected by Israel on behalf of the Palestinian Authority would have a significant impact on the Palestinian economy. The Quartet encouraged Israel and the Palestinian Authority to consider resumption of such transfers via the Temporary International Mechanism to improve the economic and humanitarian conditions in the West Bank and Gaza. In light of increased regional support for the Palestinians, the Quartet agreed to review where additional donor assistance should be focused, with particular consideration for infrastructure and development programmes that can directly improve the daily lives of Palestinians. The Quartet invited concrete proposals from the parties on specific international support that could be useful at this stage.

The Quartet welcomed the extension of the EU Border Assistance Mission at Rafah (EU-BAM). It reiterated the importance of resuming normal operations at the Rafah crossing. Taking note of the continuing threat to Israeli and Palestinian security posed by smuggling, the Quartet welcomed progress in the Quadrilateral Security Committee and called for greater efforts by all parties to improve security along the Egypt-Gaza border.
The Quartet welcomed the re-affirmation of the Arab Peace Initiative, noting that the initiative is recognized in the Roadmap as a vital element of international efforts to advance regional peace. The Arab Peace Initiative provides a welcome regional political horizon for Israel, complementing the efforts of the Quartet and of the parties themselves to advance towards negotiated, comprehensive, just and lasting peace. The Quartet noted its positive meeting with members of the Arab League in Sharm al-Sheikh on May 4, and looked forward to continued engagement with the Arab states. It welcomed the intention of the Arab League to engage Israel on the initiative, and Israeli receptiveness to such engagement. Recalling elements of the April 18 decision by the Arab League Follow-up Committee, the Quartet urged all involved to demonstrate their seriousness and commitment to making peace. In that context, the Quartet reiterated the need for a Palestinian Government committed to nonviolence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap, and reaffirmed its willingness to support such a government. The Quartet encouraged continued and expanded Arab contacts with Israel, and Israeli action to address concerns raised in the April 18 Arab League decision, including a cessation of settlement expansion and the removal of illegal outposts, as called for in the Roadmap.
Looking ahead, the Quartet discussed a calendar for the coming months to support and encourage progress on the bilateral and regional tracks. The Quartet principals agreed to meet in the region in June with the Israelis and Palestinians to review progress and discuss the way forward. The Quartet also agreed to meet in the region with members of the Arab League to follow up on the Arab Peace Initiative and efforts to advance the regional track. Principals instructed the envoys to meet beforehand to follow up and explore options for the way forward.

[23] Daniel Levy: The Problem with the Boycott, in “Prospects of Peace”, a joint project of “The Century Foundation” and “The New American Foundation”:
Britain’s University and College Union (UCU) have just voted to boycott Israeli academic institutions. The motion passed by a majority of 158 to 99.
In so doing they have joined a smattering of other unions and some church groups from Western and Northern Europe that have also supported boycotts in recent years. The only really noteworthy equivalent in the US has been the divestment campaigns conducted by some of the Episcopalian churches, although these it must be noted were pinpointed against companies directly involved in facilitating the occupation, and have anyway been partially dropped. The boycott approach is normally attacked (quite viciously) as singling out Israel for unfavorable treatment, while ignoring wrong-doing elsewhere in the globe and particularly in the Arab world. It is even equated with support for terror groups. The most devastating criticism is to charge the boycott promoters with tactics against the Jewish state that are reminiscent of the methods used against the Jews during the darkest days of 20th century Europe. I think these approaches are wide of the mark and sometimes outright offensive. Undoubtedly, some boycott fellow-travelers and perhaps even instigators have ulterior and unpleasant motives. Still I think most of its supporters are making a genuine, humanitarian-based statement of opposition to the occupation. But I, too, oppose the boycott and here’s why:
Leave aside for the moment the essential ineffectiveness of the boycott policy, which has zero economic impact. Boycotting Israel to me represents a fundamental misunderstanding of what it will take to achieve peace in the region, to end the occupation, and to deliver security for Palestinians and Israelis alike. Of course for some, this is not the goal and a boycott is part of a broader strategy of de-legitimizing Israel and its very existence in the Middle East. They should at least be told that Israel is not going anywhere, that a new Middle East dispensation without an Israel is a recipe for generations of bloodshed with plenty of injustice all around, and that they are taking up a position that is hostile to the aspirations of the vast majority of Jews around the world. This is probably why most Palestinian leaders

support a two-state solution and place boycott-promotion pretty low on their list of priorities (even Hamas is fumbling towards a two-state formula). For that not insignificant body of international opinion that staunchly opposes the occupation without being Israel-haters, who believe in human rights for Israelis and Palestinians alike, and who, in wanting to be helpful, flirt with the boycott idea, the following might be helpful:
Support for the boycott amongst Jewish Israelis, both at home and in the diaspora, really is virtually non-existent and there is no nascent movement around which such support is likely to be built. Ending the occupation and realizing a viable and an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel will require an Israeli partner. Israelis will need to either be active partners or at least acquiescent in achieving a realistic two-state solution based on the '67 lines. The international community will probably need to intervene or at least be engaged to achieve such a solution. If Israelis view the outside world as implacably hostile – and a boycott encourages that thinking – then the prospective international role fades further into the distance. Of course, the flip-side to this is that the international community begins to actively push a resolution to the conflict, including setting out its own parameters for peace.
It is much more effective to be understanding of legitimate Israeli concerns and aspirations, while not ceding an inch regarding the illegitimacy and counter-productive nature of the occupation. That is the kind of tough-love that takes into account Israeli psychology and that could actually be of help. The alternative only encourages the most unhelpful, hunker-down, garrison state mentality amongst an Israeli public whose self-perception is already one of persecution. The most dovish Minister in the current Israeli government, Yuli Tamir, who happens to have the education portfolio, was the first one to come out against the new UK boycott. The coalition for two-states and against occupation and war should be broad-based enough to embrace a large Israeli peace-camp, the majority of Palestinian and Arab pragmatists, and the global peace movement. And quite simply, a boycott-based agenda cannot do that.

[24] Nathan Guttman: Dovish Groups Mull Mega-Merger In Bid To Build Peace Powerhouse, in "Forward" 30.05.2007:
Washington – Merger talks are heating up among three leading dovish Israel advocacy groups in a development that proponents hope will produce a new mega-organization with greater political clout and more money to push for a two-state solution.
Leaders of Americans for Peace Now, the Israel Policy Forum and Brit Tzedek v'Shalom are weighing the idea and are expected to reach a decision by the fall. The discussions are being held within each of the groups and between leaders of the three organizations, under the auspices of several Washington-based activists who are promoting the idea of a pro-peace Jewish lobby.
The idea of forming a joint left-leaning entity – that some portray as a dovish counter to the existing pro-Israel lobby — has been bouncing around for six months and was initially seen as being backed by billionaire George Soros. At this point, according to organizers, Soros is out, but the talks have reached the final stages with at least two options on the table.
Some liberal observers are hoping that a new joint entity could emerge as a counter to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby that doves have accused of working against efforts to convince the White House to do more to advance Israeli-Palestinian talks. Organizers of the new initiative are publicly dismissing any talk of weakening or competing against Aipac; at the same time, they insist that the goal is to create a new voice for American Jews.
"This is about creating something new, big and bold," said Jeremy Ben-Ami, a main proponent of the current merger talks. A former Clinton administration aide, Ben-Ami is now a senior executive at Fenton Communications.
Proponents of the merger aim to raise $10 million – double the combined annual budgets of the three organizations — to help launch the new initiative. Part of the money would come from contributors who already back the three existing groups, but most of the $10 million – if the goal is reached – is expected to come from donors who currently do not give to Jewish organizations or to other pro-Israel groups. Among the potential donors being targeted are Jewish figures in Hollywood, as well as young liberal Jewish philanthropists who currently focus their giving on

non-Jewish causes Soros attended only one of the first meetings about the initiative, but he eventually dropped out. Other activists and donors have continued pushing the idea forward.
In addition to Ben-Ami, the list of organizers includes Daniel Levy, one-time adviser to then-Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak, and Jim Gerstein, a Democratic strategist who is active in pro-peace organizations.
According to sources familiar with the talks, the organizations are being asked to choose between two options: instituting a formal merger that would create a joint pro-peace organization under which the three existing groups would continue to operate, or creating a separate new body that would raise funds independently and provide financial assistance and backing to projects directed by the existing groups.
Originally, Jewish activists behind the new initiative had planned to come up with an agreed structure and a strong commitment for financial backing by this summer, but difficulties in fundraising, and drawn-out discussions within the groups, forced a postponement of the target date for launching the new project.
“Jews like to talk; it takes time,” an official close to the negotiations said. After initially discussing the idea in small forums, it was recently brought to larger circles within the leadership of all three groups. The first meeting took place Tuesday between IPF and APN leaders, without the presence of the initiative’s outside organizers. The two groups discussed not only the prospects of the new initiative but also the question of whether it should include a grass-roots organization such as Brit Tzedek. Many of those involved in the new initiative are remaining tight-lipped and have asked their members to keep the negotiations away from the public eye. When asked about the talks, officials with all three groups refused to discuss details.
David Elcott, IPF’s executive director, said that “the groups are talking with each other, and that is a good thing.” Diane Cantor, executive director of Brit Tzedek, called the situation “fluid” and said that “it is encouraging to see there is such willingness to work together.” Ori Nir, APN’s spokesman and the Forward’s former Washington correspondent, said that “APN is taking part in talks about the new initiative with the hope that these discussions will lead to positive results.”
Despite the general reluctance to delve into details, some officials and lay leaders involved in the project provided the Forward with Iinformation on the proposed structure and the obstacles that the initiative is facing.
According to sources close to the talks, the new organization would tap the specific expertise of each of the member groups: Brit Tzedek would continue to coordinate its grass-roots operation, IPF would focus on formulating policy proposals and APN would lead the lobbying efforts. The division of responsibilities would not be rigid, and APN and IPF are expected to overlap on policy and advocacy work. Each group would maintain its fundraising operations, with the money raised by the joint project added on to their respective budgets. Discussions have yet to focus on the structure of the proposed entity’s joint leadership and its process for hiring staffers and staking out positions.
Currently, the three groups raise about $5 million a year for their work in America. APN’s budget nears $3 million, but a third of the money is sent to the Israeli organization Peace Now; IPF raises $2 million, and Brit Tzedek $1 million.
Ideologically, all three groups agree on the need to strengthen Israel through promoting the peace process. They all call for stepped-up American diplomatic efforts on this front. Still, differences exist. APN, for example, focues a more resources and monitoring and criticizing Israeli settlement policy.
Sources close to the initiative say IPF now seems to be the group most reluctant to move forward with the merger. These sources say that IPF, with the largest staff of the three groups, worries that it could lose some of its power by joining a larger framework. For APN, one of the main problems would be the question of how to maintain ties with its Israeli mother ship, Peace Now. And for Brit Tzedek, a significant issue would be maintaining the group’s identity when joining with two older and more established organizations.
Some participants are also wondering whether a unified structure would end up weakening the influence of the organizations involved. “Is one voice better than many voices?” asked one of the activists involved, pointing to the fact that one joint group might be less visible on Capitol Hill than several smaller ones.

The new project has yet to be given a formal name. Those involved refer to it in jest as the “J Street Project.” This is a Washington insider’s joke referencing the fact that there is no J in the city’s alphabetical street grid, and playing off the name of the Republican plan to change the political face of the lobbying industry that is situated on K Street.
This joke also underscores the skepticism with which the new initiative is met by many in the Jewish community, including some of the activists involved in the project. The time that has passed since the initiative was first introduced; the lengthy deliberations within the participating groups, and the difficulty in raising the core sum needed to launch the project, all have fed this sense of skepticism about the project’s future. One reason for the delays is the fact that talks with donors were practically put on hold until the three groups are able to come to a decision on the proposed merger.
The project got off to a difficult start after being initially portrayed as a challenge to Aipac. Ever since, those involved in the initiative make it a point not to talk about Aipac. They also avoid positioning themselves as a counterweight to what is seen as the hawkish pro-Israel lobby.
Yet in private conversations, the issue of serving as a dovish balance to Aipac is discussed frequently. One activist involved in the initiative spoke of the need to send Congress a message that “there are other voices in the community” and that lawmakers “don’t have to automatically support unnecessary resolutions” about Israel. Another activist said that many in the Jewish community “are dying” to present an alternative to Aipac on issues relating to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. At the same time, all those involved stressed their strong appreciation for Aipac’s role in supporting and strengthening Israel. They made clear that the new group — if and when created — would not aim to challenge or replace Aipac as the leading pro-Israel lobby.

[25] Friedman has already failed, in “Haaretz”-online 31.05.2007:
But all the preliminary assessments became irrelevant when it became clear that Friedmann's agenda was to improve the judicial system only after demolishing it. It's not important whether some of his criticism is justified. What's important is the damage he has done to the good name of the system for which he is responsible. If there is any "accomplishment" Friedmann can already claim, it is serious, unforgivable damage to public confidence in the prosecution and the courts. If Friedmann continues his opposition day in and day out to people, appointments, institutions and decisions, then it won't be long before a criminal tells the judges that they have no right to imprison him because they serve the gang of the rule of law and their decisions are based on irrelevant reasons.
Friedmann can explain that his oppositional conduct is based on a legitimate worldview, which is stringent in its understanding of the separation of powers and wants to strengthen the Knesset and the government. But in the meantime, he is destabilizing the building's foundations. Everything he suggests – changing the composition of the judicial selection committee; reducing the value of seniority in the selection of a Supreme Court president; changing the makeup of the panel that selects the state prosecutor, such that the retired judge who serves on it is chosen by the justice minister rather than the Supreme Court president; changing the way the attorney general is appointed; changing the way the selection committee is appointed, such that the court doesn't determine which judge sits on it; expanding the power of the politicians at the expense of civil servants when it comes to selecting the state prosecutor, an area the politicians should actually stay away from – raises the possibility that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert will select the state prosecutor himself from among several candidates, the same prosecutor who will decide whether to indict Olmert.
The silencing of the attorney general this week, when he tried to warn of the politicization of the process of appointing the state prosecutor, does not contribute to good government. The attorney general must be completely independent, in accordance with the democratic tradition of Israel, and reforms must be made collaboratively.
Until recently it seemed that the argument between the Supreme Court president and the justice minister was personal. But it has become increasingly clear that the dispute is about the independence of the judicial system, which a non-political

minister is actually making intolerably subordinate to politics. The argument that the government cannot function due to a fear of criminal investigations resembles the patricidal son's plea for mercy because he is now an orphan. If there were less governmental corruption, the intervention of the judicial system would diminish. Olmert appointed Friedmann in reaction to the indictment of his friend Haim Ramon. No explanation of principles will cover that up.

[26] Luisa Morgantini: Let's recognise our failure: we are complicit in the escalation of violence Strasbourg, 22 May 2007:
Israelis and Palestinians are paying the price of our lack of capacity to act politically with responsibility and justice in the Middle East.
Once again, the devastating consequences overwhelm the Palestinian civilians, the thousands of refugees in Lebanon who are facing the attacks of the Lebanese army. Once again the Palestinians are subject to collective punishment because of a group of extremists, enemies of the Palestinian people – Fatah El Islam.
The European Union, the international community must feel morally responsible for the escalation of violence, morally implicated in the killing of helpless civilians in Gaza and in the Lebanese refugee camps. The risk of externalisation of the conflict between Israel and Palestine is the business of us all. It is necessary to maintain the autonomy of the Palestinian cause and of the rights of the peoples of Israel and Palestine to have two sovereign states, recognised and secure. The time for words is past: It is an indispensable duty to recognise our failure, that of the international community, of the parties, of the movements to uphold international law and put an end to a military occupation that has lasted forty years. The tragedy of these days was announced long ago. We've been repeating the slogan "Two peoples and two states" since 1980, but only one state exist, the Israeli state, an occupying power without security. On the other side is an occupied people, humiliated and without freedom.
Humanitarian aid from the European Union is no substitute for what is indispensable: a political solution and a transparent diplomatic effort, working for the unity of Palestinians and not for their division and able to impose respect for international law on the Israeli government.
Why are we helping extremists to undermine the power of the national unity government? What more must the Palestinian government do?
The steps that are needed now from the EU and from the quartet are the recognition of the Palestinian national unity government, which in all its complexity of political representation, responds to the conditions set by the quartet with its own programme and expresses the will to return to the negotiating table, accepting the historic opportunity of the Arab League peace initiative. Secondly, it is urgent to apply pressure on the Israeli government in every possible way so that it ceases the systematic abuse of international law; the unpunished target killings, the theft of land with the construction of the Wall, and the Palestinian taxes and revenues arbitrarily withheld. The military occupation kills every hypothesis of security, every hope of peace, for both the Palestinians and the Israelis. The Palestinians must recover their unity and stop their fratricidal fighting and do everything possible to stop the rocket attacks on neighbouring Israeli cities. Palestine is falling to pieces and with it the entire Middle East: the consequences of these injustices and for this violence will come back on us after they have destroyed thousands of innocent civilians.

[27] A kind of military coup, in “Haaretz”-online 21.05.2007: Does Israel still uphold that proper state of affairs in which the elected government sets policy and civil servants carry it out? According to an article published in Haaretz yesterday ("The spirit of the commander prevails" by Meron Rapoport), it seems that with regard to the army, the answer is negative. While ministers speak about a two-state solution, a kind of military coup is taking place in the West Bank, in which the Israel Defense Forces are turning the area into the state of the settlers. While the Palestinian population is being suffocated, the settlements are flourishing.
It does not make much difference whether the Defense Ministry is headed by a civilian minister, because the army has its own agenda, and its subordination to the government is often simulated. For years, Israel was proud of the democratic miracle of an obedient army that did not accumulate too much power and served

the elected government loyally, even though the country was engaged in a continual existential war. During the last war, however, cracks appeared in this faith, when it turned out that the cabinet had been dragged into approving military plans that were never even submitted to it. And even worse things happen every day in the occupied territories. Haggai Alon, an adviser to the defense minister who is responsible for the fabric of life in the West Bank, says that the army disregards the government's diplomatic agenda and essentially serves as the settlers' army. Or at least, that is how it was throughout Dan Halutz's tenure as chief of staff.
One shocking example of this democratic crisis is the army's disregard of court decisions regarding the route of the separation fence. After years of High Court of Justice hearings on every meter of the fence, with the goal of striking a balance between security needs and the needs of Palestinian daily life, it turns out that along Route 317, which links several settlements in the southern Mount Hebron area, the army ignored these decisions and built a mini-fence in addition to the one that was formally approved – and it is located along the original route that the High Court nixed.
Additionally, a section of the fence near the Trans-Samaria Highway, which was supposed to be built near the Green Line, was never completed due to the settlers' objections. The army also stopped conducting security checks on cars with Israeli license plates due to the protests lodged by settlers, who did not want to stop at the checkpoints – even though an explosives-laden car with an Israeli license plate recently entered Israel. The IDF does not report to the government on how many roadblocks there are in the West Bank; thus the government can talk about making life easier for the Palestinians while the army refrains from doing so. Similarly, thanks to assistance from IDF officers, settlers moved into a disputed house in Hebron; downtown Hebron was closed to Palestinians; and 3,000 demonstrators reached the evacuated settlement of Homesh in defiance of the government's decision. Settlements are also expanding in various places because the army has turned a blind eye, and sometimes even with its active assistance.
In light of all this, Amir Peretz's talk about dismantling West Bank settlement outposts, like Ehud Olmert and Tzipi Livni's promises to reach a new agreement on dividing the land between Israel and Palestine, sounds emptier than ever. It evidently makes no difference which party is in power, as long as the army serves the settlers rather than the state.

[28] Reuven Kaminer: Mit Baruch Kimmerling aufrecht stehen (Auszug), 23.05.2007:
Wir alle müssen aufrecht und sprachgewandt wie Baruch Kimmerling reden, der diese Woche in Israel gestorben ist. Niemand von uns erinnert sich an ihn anders, als wie er sich mit Krämpfen bewegt, in seinem fahrenden Rollstuhl sitzt, in Worten mit gewaltiger Wirkung spricht und über einen Punkt lächelt, den er in einem Wortgefecht gewonnen hat. Seine Klarheit des Denkens, seine Hingabe an Fairness und an die Wahrheit in der Politik und in der Wissenschaft haben Baruch Kimmerling zu einer heroischen Gestalt gemacht. Jeden Tag und jedes Jahr rollte er durch den Nebel des Schmerzes und über Barrieren seiner schweren Behinderung zu seiner wissenschaftlichen Arbeit, wobei er die ganze Zeit einen klaren und mutigen Standpunkt gegen die moralische Degeneration einnahm, die dieses Landes besetzt hält. Intellektuelle des Establishments fühlten so etwas wie Vertrauen, wenn sie Anklagen zurückwiesen, dass Israel einen Genozid begehe, weil sie auf die überzogene Beschuldigung eine Antwort wussten, doch auf Kimmerlings höchst analytische Kategorie des Politizids hatten sie keine glaubhafte Antwort.

[29] A Conversation with Zbigniew Brzezinski by Robert Kuttner, in “The American Prospect” 20.05.2007:
After the failure of adventures based on fantasies, it's time for a big dose of reality in America's Mideast policy. America's most notable foreign policy realist speaks with the Prospect.
The premise of this special collection of articles on peace in the Middle East is that all the major elements of regional conflict and cooperation are linked. These include U.S. relations with Iran, options for U.S. exit from Iraq, U.S. containment of militant Islamism, economic development of the region, and a settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict. In this interview, which frames the issue, Prospect co-editor

Robert Kuttner discusses with former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski how the various elements of Middle East peace fit together.
Robert Kuttner: In your view, what are the prospects for some kind of big regional settlement in the Middle East? And how do the several pieces fit together?
Zbigniew Brzezinski: I think that a regional settlement is possible, provided the power that is most capable of promoting it engages itself seriously. This is not to say that it will be easy, but it is not impossible. The overwhelming element of uncertainty is whether the United States has the will and the gumption to tackle the issue.
RK: What is the relationship between some kind of tolerable stabilization of Iraq and a broader regional settlement of the other major outstanding issues, the two obvious ones being Israel-Palestine and Iran?
ZB: The Israeli-Palestinian issue is ripe for settlement, provided the United States pursues it, because neither of the two parties on the official level has the will and the predisposition to seek that settlement. By now we know what the fundamental parameters of a genuine settlement are, and if they're not implemented, there will be no settlement.
The Iraqi situation will take time to stabilize itself, but the longer the conflict lasts and the longer the occupation lasts, the more the civil war and the anti-U.S. insurgency are going to be intertwined. Therefore, it is important to cut the nexus and to set in motion a political process that facilitates United States disengagement and contributes to stabilization. It's hard to say how quickly it could be achieved, but within two years there could be genuinely significant improvement.
Iran is going to be there forever, and Iran is going to be important in the region whether we like it or not. And it's in our interest, first of all, to avoid a collision, because an American-Iranian collision, either deliberately provoked or accidentally precipitated, would bog the United States down in a conflict that will then span both Iraq and Iran.
RK: Let's take them one at a time. If we want some kind of lessening of tensions with Iran, what's the sequence by which we bring that about?
ZB: Well, what seems a good way to begin – which is in fact what is happening right now, but the outcome of which is obviously uncertain – is the dialogue about regional security. This is presumably focused specifically on Iraq, but by implication it involves others. If we are prepared to be serious on this, I think that could in turn make it somewhat easier to perhaps eliminate the obstacle to more discussion about the nuclear problem – that obstacle being the U.S. decision, clumsy and basically stupid, to insist that the Iranians give something up as a precondition for a serious dialogue on the subject. I frankly don't understand how anyone in his right mind would make that condition if he were serious about negotiations, unless the objective is to prevent negotiations.
RK: Is the whole or partial normalization of relations with Iran and a lifting of sanctions the first step, or the last step?
ZB: I think the first step is the dialogue with Iran, with Syria, and the others, but particularly with Iran. That could lead to some understanding regarding the nuclear issue in which, for example, the Iranians voluntarily decide to suspend for a period of time enrichment, and we suspend some of the sanctions that we have imposed over the years or very recently. I don't have a particular menu for this process. But it seems to me it doesn't require the mind of a rocket scientist to figure that this is an approach that has worked in other cases. And we did, after all, after several painful years, manage to change our negotiating position toward North Korea. So why shouldn't we be able to do it also toward Iran?
RK: Well, in light of how the Korean shift came about – how Secretary Condi Rice and National Security Advisor Steve Hadley had to go directly to the president and cut Vice President Cheney out of the loop – do you see a shift in who's making policy and a shift in the ability of the real hard-liners to veto progress?
ZB: I think the real shift is that in the case of North Korea, we had a party to the talks who was tough-minded and clear as to what ought to be done. And they weren't particularly hesitant in communicating it cogently to us. I refer to the Chinese. And on the U.S. side, we're fortunate to have a negotiator, who, while compliant with the general ideological line of the administration, is tough-minded and independent. That's Chris Hill. He was able in a sense to foster a serious dialogue with the Chinese and within the administration at the same time. I don't

see that yet in our relationship with Iran, but it is to these factors that I ascribe the change, and not so much to the notion that Rice and Hadley had an epiphany.
RK: Well, let's shift to Israel. You said the terms of the settlement are well known by now.
ZB: Yes, and if I may say so, I have been advocating them for years. And I think, not because of my advocacy, they now are more generally accepted, and the public-opinion polls show that the Israeli public and the Palestinian public will accept them. I suspect the majority of American Jews, who are predominantly liberal, would also accept them. They may not be acceptable to the Likudniks and the right wing in Israel politically. They may not be acceptable to Hamas or some key elements of it. They may not be acceptable to AIPAC, which tends to be more catholic than the pope when it comes to Israel.
But the basic elements, in my judgment, are the following. One: no right of return. That's a very bitter pill for the Palestinians to swallow; I have to emphasize that. It's a fundamental issue for them. But there cannot be any right of return, unless they package it as 20,000 Palestine grandmothers over the age of 80 and certified not to be capable of child bearing, something like this.
Now second, in return for that, there has to be the sharing of Jerusalem. Let me just be as blunt on this as I can be, even though I know that this is an emotional issue. There will be no peace if Jerusalem is entirely controlled by Israel. Because you can see the Golden Dome from the West Bank, and it's a living symbol of what they all consider to be an unfair peace it has to be shared. The outline is roughly what Bill Clinton and Ehud Barak were talking about, and the Geneva Accords actually are the most specific description of how this could be done.
The third is a division based roughly on the 1967 borders, but not mechanically, because a number of settlements that are near the border and are largely urban should be incorporated into Israel, in return for which there should be an absolutely asymmetrical adjustment in favor of the Palestinian state. Otherwise, it's again perceived as an unfair treaty in a setting in which close to six million Israelis and roughly five million Palestinians have already divided the previous Palestine mandate, 78 percent in favor of Israel and 22 percent for Palestine. So you can't expect the Palestinians to accept any further cuts.
And the fourth element is the comprehensive demilitarization of the Palestinian state, with a major UN presence. When I first advocated that, some critics called me crazy, and yet today we have a major presence of military personnel from NATO countries in southern Lebanon with Israel accepting it. And I think this crazy idea will probably be actually beneficial to Israel.
RK: This would include not just presence, but explicit security guarantees?
ZB: Yes, absolutely. I would even say that if Israel signs a peace treaty on that basis with the Palestinians, I would personally favor Israel's membership in NATO.
RK: Do you see an enhanced European role in the region as the American credibility has been diminished?
ZB: You know, I said that China plays an important role in the Korea negotiations. But the Europeans haven't played an important role in the Middle East, because there's no Europe; there's only European countries. And there won't be a European role until Europe – by which I mean primarily the political leadership of Great Britain, Germany, and France, maybe supported on the margins by Spain, Italy, and Poland – comes to us and says, "This is our European policy. We are your allies. We are willing to work with you, but policy is shared, and responsibilities are shared." That's in effect what the Chinese said to us. Such a Europe would be important, but we're not going to have such a Europe for some years to come.
RK: And that being the case, Europe won't be a major player?
ZB: Europe can be supportive, and the Europeans will certainly support us if we do what I think we should do. But they'll be frustrated and disappointed with us if we don't act, but unable to do it on their own. And then we'd have an even bigger mess.
RK: Before the American invasion of Iraq, there was a lot of talk about the road to Jerusalem leading through Baghdad: Destroy Saddam and you supposedly strengthen the prospects for peace on terms acceptable to Israel. Some people now argue that the road runs the other way – that an Israel-Palestine settlement would reduce tensions in the region because it would remove one of the principal frustrations in the Arab relationship – and, for that matter, the Iranian relationship –

with the United States. On the other hand, has so much damage been done now by the Iraq War and the radicalization of Islam that even a settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict would no longer be so helpful in bringing greater peace and stability to the region?
ZB: Prior to the war with Iraq, an Israel-Palestine settlement, with us playing a creative role in it, would have fundamentally altered Arab attitudes toward the United States. The United States has been viewed in the region somewhat benignly as a kind of post-imperial presence, replacing the British and the French, in spite of its support for Israel. But in recent years, when we shifted from being a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians, that positive image began to erode and provoke, among some, intense hostility toward America. Some of that would disappear if there was such a settlement.
Unfortunately, we have done other damaging things since then. We have destroyed the most viable and the most modern Arab country in the Middle East. We destroyed the Iraqi state, loathsome as its leadership was. Now, we are also destroying the country – 24 million people, two million of whom have been driven out of the country, one and a half million of whom have been driven out of their homes, and roughly half a million of whom are not living today because of what happened. Not that all of them were killed by us, but some children were not born because of us. Other people died earlier because of us. There's been a general decline in fertility, and a general increase in mortality, because of what has happened. That has created a lot of resentment, obviously.
And then on top of it, there is the Islamophobic rhetoric that Bush has fostered, and the irresponsible plunge of the mass media and the entertainment industry into terror sensationalism with a strong racist, religious tone to it, resulting in a feeling of real resentment. Some of these manifestations really, to me, are reminiscent of the characterizations of Jews in Nazi Germany, the deliberate caricatures of entire groups of people in a conscious way. I am particularly shocked that some Jewish student organizations are now promoting that with films and so forth, as if they were not aware of the fact that the Holocaust was the product of similar hatred; and that is profoundly disturbing, politically and morally.
RK: But even with all of that, if the United States hopes to get back some of its moral influence in the world and region, an Israel-Palestine settlement would still help?
ZB: It would help a hell of a lot. And it would help a lot also toward solving the Iraqi problem, and then probably thereby facilitate some sort of a reasonable balance in relations with Iran. And all of that, cumulatively, would have a very profound impact. But it would no longer have the same close-to-total effect if we had done this when I think we could have done it.
And we could have done it twice. We could have done it with Bush Senior. If he had been re-elected, it would have been done, but he wasn't re-elected. And then it could have been done if Clinton had been more serious and less politically calculating and had applied himself to it, not just a few months before the elections but maybe a couple of years before the elections.
RK: Let's turn to Iraq. What is the least bad way out of Iraq, and what is the least bad scenario for what happens after we leave?
ZB: In a nutshell: a Kurdish/Shiite, somewhat theocratic regime that probably uses a combination of compromise and brutal violence, resolves the civil strife, is then nominally friendly toward us, but is not really a reliable friend. But at the same time, Iraqi nationalism is still somewhat of a barrier to Iran in the region.
RK: A less brutal version of Saddam?
ZB: You're putting it rather brutally yourself, but that's essentially right.
RK: And what do the Sunnis get?
ZB: The Sunnis get what they can get, and that depends on whether they prefer to accommodate or whether they want to fight. I don't feel that it is America's responsibility to resolve their civil war – although it is in a sense, unfortunately, a civil war that we have produced. So we cannot be totally passive, nor indifferent. Nonetheless, you don't solve civil wars by foreign occupation unless you can make that occupation totally successful. The fact of the matter is, we're not able; not physically, but we're not able as a matter of will to end that civil war by force of arms. That would require a combination of an enormous military effort with extraordinary brutality, and the country isn't prepared to support either.

RK: So does that mean – withdrawal by a date certain?

ZB: Well, as you may know, I've been advocating for well over a year now that we set a date, and I've been using the date of one year. That year has already passed, because my voice hasn't been heeded.
RK: But what happens? Let's assume we heed your voice, and on June 1st of 2008, the last American troop leaves, and civil war intensifies.
ZB: Well, if people know that we are leaving – first of all, it's not going to be a surprise. People have to adjust to that reality. And I would imagine some intelligent Shiite leaders would say, "Let's compromise." Others would say, "Let's fight." Probably both elements, both aspects will happen. And again, the dust settles.
RK: And do other regional countries play a role, and do we care what that role is?
ZB: Well, not really. I think the Syrians are going to get involved. The Syrians will be very anxious not to be left out of the peace arrangement between Palestine and Israel. The Iranians obviously will favor the Shiites, and there's a simplistic assumption among some here that the Iraqi Shiites are somehow or other willing sacrifices. The fact is, they fought very well against the Iranians in the eight-year-long Iran-Iraq war.
RK: And what about the concern that Iraq would be a hotbed for radical Islamist terrorists?
ZB: I see no reason for that. The Kurds would still need American support in the part of the Iraq where they are influential. The Shiites would still need some balance between themselves and Iran, which would require support from us. After all, there are territorial disputes, which, of course, the Iraqis remember. And the Saudis would have some influence over the Sunnis. I think we could probably manage that. It's not going to be "a cake walk" by any means, but I think that scenario is still, despite its inherent uncertainties, probably preferable to the consequences of continued civil war with America mixed up in that civil war directly, and perhaps inching toward some unintended collision with Iran in the process.
RK: Can you articulate a principled basis for when to reach accommodation with hostile or even odious regimes? Iran is not Nazi Germany. But where do you draw the line in terms of people whom you can do business with and reach a settlement of some kind based on mutual interests versus people who are totally abhorrent?
ZB: One reaches a settlement not because one likes the people involved or because they're good people. But one reaches a settlement because, in at least some circumstances, a settlement is better than a war. It's as simple as that. Now if Iran wants a war with the United States, they will certainly get one. But I don't want America to want a war with Iran, because I think we're better off without a war with Iran. And it's no comfort to me that some Iranians may want to commit suicide. So I think one should always give settlement a chance, unless one is attacked.
RK: So you don't believe that the fact that some people in the Middle East do want to commit suicide makes it a challenge of a whole other order of magnitude?
ZB: Well, some people may, but that doesn't mean that states will. We'll have problems with groups and terrorists, but if states involved don't want to commit suicide, then they could become allies in containing these groups, provided there is some accommodation on outstanding issues.
RK: How do you see the United States regaining moral authority in the region and the world after these debacles under the Bush administration?
ZB: There's a very simple, very basic answer. The very simple answer is by surviving the next 20 months without an escalation of war. That automatically means the situation becomes different at the end of 2008.
RK: But then the hard work begins.
ZB: But then the hard work begins with the new president, who is not encumbered by the catastrophic judgments of his predecessor, nor with the fanaticism of his predecessor, not by underestimating the difficulties.
RK: Do you think the more fanatical, paranoid factions of the Bush administration have been weakened to the point where policy is already changing?
ZB: I think the composition of the group within the administration has been diluted. The big uncertainty is the disposition at the very top.

[30] Gideon Levy: If Gaza survives, Europe must act, in “The Guardian” 19.05.2007: Gaza is on the precipice.

This has implications not only for the security of Palestinians and Israelis but also for further radicalizing the region beyond. As Mogadishu enters its second decade of chaos and ungovernability there is a cautionary tale for neighbours seeking to fuel civil wars.
With Gaza collapsing, the key culprits are considered to be the Palestinians, Israel, the United States, and even the Arab states. The Palestinians have been unable to hold together a functioning unity government and have too easily resorted to violence in addressing their internal and external problems.
The gun battles are now often between factions within the factions of Hamas and Fatah, overlaid by simple criminality and clan-based feuds. The Palestinian public has understandably lost faith in the political process.
Israel left Gaza but maintains – and even strengthens – its occupation of the West Bank, and the attempt to de-link the two is always bound to fail. The unilateral disengagement from Gaza was described by its Israeli architect as an act of punishment, rather than peace and stability-building. Israeli restrictions on Palestinian movement continue to be the proximate cause of the dire economic situation as reported again recently in a World Bank study. The US-led the drive for democratization in the region only to become prime enforcer of an international embargo against a democratically elected Palestinian government after the 2006 Parliamentary elections.
For six years, America has provided no political hope and no political horizon to resolve the conflict, with policy instead meandering between ineffective conflict management and irresponsible conflict promotion. Most of the surrounding Arab states, acting in fear of their own Islamist oppositions, have unhelpfully intervened in Palestinian internal politics. But the withering complicity of Europe in this sad state of affairs often goes unmentioned.
Gaza is on Europe's doorstep; what goes on there has a ripple effect among Europe's minority Muslim communities. This is a European interest, and Europe should know better than America's neocon Neanderthals.
After the Palestinian Legislative Council elections Europe timidly signed up to the preconditions for engaging the new PA government. The EU became part of the diplomatic and financial boycott of the Palestinians' elected leadership.
Europe seemed so thrilled to be invited to the Middle East peace process big boys' table of the international Quartet that being there became an end in itself.
Even with all the difficulties of managing common foreign and security policy in an EU of 27 nations, the absence of a European position is a damning indictment.
US deputy national security advisor Elliot Abrams is reported to have recently boasted to a meeting of Jewish Republicans that current American engagement on Israel-Palestine was "process for the sake of process" intended to silence nascent European and Arab criticism.
And indeed the European response has been muted. European aid to the Palestinians has continued while its effectiveness has continued to dwindle. To circumvent the economic embargo, Europe led in the establishment of a Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) to channel international aid.
The humanitarian imperative behind TIM is laudable, and it provided a smart technical-bureaucratic solution; but, as so much in the Middle East, the temporary has become permanent, and the abnormal and unsustainable has been prolonged. Rather than reconfiguring its approach when a unity government was established between Fatah and Hamas, the EU simply continued with TIM.
As the World Bank has pointed out, and Nathan Brown of the Carnegie Endowment has detailed in his study, “Requiem for Palestinian Reform: Clear Lessons from a Troubled Record”, this approach is undermining more than a decade of efforts at Palestinian institution-building. In fact, the EU failed to live up to its own at least implicit commitment to the Palestinians that, were a Fatah-Hamas unity government to be agreed, the embargo would be ended and normal aid channels resumed.
It is indeed informative and deeply distressing that the two European governments who have pursued engagement are the non-EU member states of Switzerland and Norway. If and when the situation in Gaza pulls back from the brink, then the international community should pause to consider its failed policies, and Europe should take a lead, at least in some areas. The Quartet should take advantage of, rather than eschew, the use of variable geometry in its engagement with the

Palestinian Authority. If it is serious and committed, then Europe can do things that the Israelis and Americans, and even some Arab states, are unwilling or unable to do.
Israel's lack of appetite for a dialogue with Hamas at this stage may be shortsighted, but it is certainly understandable, and anyway the feeling is probably mutual. At the last meeting of European foreign ministers, there was an apparent willingness to consider resumption of direct assistance to the PA.
EU external relations commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner is apparently eager to push in this direction, but the reorientation should not stop there. Ideally the new leaderships in France and Britain will be open to new thinking.
Reaching an accommodation with reformist political Islamists is a crucial part of any realistic pushback strategy against al-Qaeda. The Palestinian Hamas reality may not be the ideal laboratory conditions for initiating such an approach, but it is the one we have. Making a Palestinian unity government work is the best option for Palestinians, but also for Israel and an international community interested in stabilizing security and creating the building blocks for a renewed peace process. It is also the choice of President Abbas and the Marwan Barghouti-affiliated young leadership faction of Fatah.
Europe should be pushing a three-point agenda – part it can do alone, and part requires convincing others. First, EU diplomatic engagement with all parties, including Hamas, to promote a stable PA unity government. Second, resume direct financial assistance to the PA and encourage Israel to release Palestinian tax money it is holding. And finally, work with the Quartet and the parties to extend any future Gaza ceasefire to the West Bank.

[31] Gershon Baskin: Answering my critics, in „Jerusalem Post“ 21.05.2007:
Since February 2005, I have been writing this column in the *Jerusalem Post* every other week. The talkbacks to my articles which also appear on jpost.com are consistently angry, aggressive, and opposed to almost everything I write. The responses to my repeated calls for taking steps toward peace with our neighbors have been complete rejection.
The basis of opposition comes from those who question the very existence of the Palestinian people. Others, who might be willing to recognize that Palestinians do exist, are not wiling to accept the reality of their presence on any part of the Land of Israel. Others who might be willing to accept the presence of Palestinians in some part of Eretz Israel are not willing to accept the possibility of equal rights for them within the State of Israel or even in areas that are under the control of the State of Israel.
I have been called everything from a self-hating Jew to a post-Zionist. I am neither. I am and have always been very Jewish and very Zionist. The main motivations behind all of what I believe are in fact both my Jewish identity and my Zionist one. For me the existence of State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people is the ultimate expression of the national strategic interests of the Jewish people. It is an expression of our liberation and our determination to be a free people in our land. But Israel cannot fulfill the national strategic interests of the Jewish people if it is a state built on oppression, persecution and denial of the national rights of another people.
Like or not, recognize it or not, there is another people living with us on this land. It does not matter when that people defined itself in national terms. It does not matter if they did not declare independence before 1967. It does not matter if they (and we) failed to bring about their independence through the Oslo process. The reality of their existence and our failure to remove ourselves from ruling over them is the gravest danger to the continuation of the Zionist enterprise since the very establishment of the State of Israel.
Many of my critics are celebrating the bloodshed in Gaza caused by Palestinians fighting other Palestinians. What those in celebration fail to realize is that the destruction of Palestinian governance in Gaza and perhaps later in the West Bank is a disastrous situation for Israel. Whether they realize it or not, we need a Palestinian partner.
FROM ALL of my critics I have yet to understand in practical terms what they propose as an alternative to serve the interests of Israel and the Jewish people. I don't believe that there are real Jews who could even think of the possibility of

removing the Palestinians from here by force. There is the notion of "transfer by choice" – a ridiculous idea based on the suggestion that if we make their lives so intolerable, they will chose to pick up and leave on their own.
Could that be done in the name of Judaism? Let's not forget the genius of those who see the separation walls as the ultimate solution. Let's build walls high enough and electronic fences sophisticated enough that we can close the gates, lock the doors, throw away the keys and make believe that what exists on the other side is not our concern. Those brilliant planners only forgot that we have hundreds of thousands of settlers on the other side of walls and fences. They also forgot that those settlements are completely in contravention of international law.
Oh yes, I forgot, we don't have to observe international law because we already know that they entire world is against us and we are a people "will always dwell alone." "It doesn't matter what the goyim think or do, it only matters what we do."
It is doubtful if those Palestinians, and there are hundreds of thousands of them, who truly want to make peace with us, will be able to survive and prevail against the hatred, anger and extremism of Islamic fundamentalism which is on the rise as a result of continuing despair.
I must honestly confess, I don't know if we as a state of the Jewish people will be able to survive either. Our hatred, our fears, our extremism and our arrogance have helped us to arrive at a place and a time when the possibility of liberating ourselves from the occupation of the Palestinian people may be too late. I, for one, am at a total loss of what happens then. Once the possibility of creating a Palestinian state next to Israel is no longer real, it seems to me that the dream of a democratic state of the Jewish people comes to an end. Israel can and will continue to exist but it will no longer be able to claim its commitment to democracy or to prophetic values of our Biblical teachings.
Once there is no longer a two-state option, Palestinians will divert their and the world's attention to the demand for full democracy within a singular state. They will not talk about a bi-national state; that is not what their struggle will be predicated on. Their demand will be for one man one vote. They will demand to de-Zionize and de-Judaize Israel.
We in response will dig in deeper. Israel will fight off the international onslaught which will remove the very legitimacy that the international community granted the Jewish people's right to a state of their own in November 29, 1947 when the UN Resolution calling for the establishment of two states in Palestine was first passed.
IN THE end, if we fail to bring an end to the occupation and if we fail to make peace with our Palestinian neighbors, we will be bringing about our own downfall.
Whatever my critics may think, I am not a prophet of doom – for prophecy, as they say, has been given to the fools.
I am no fool. It is not possible to simply ignore the problem. It is not possible for us to simply use our military might to wipe out the problem either. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a military problem and there are no military solutions to it. This is a political conflict between two peoples fighting for national self-determination. There are ways for mutual accommodation, but they require changing "the disk," because the old logic of mutual destruction is working too well. We as Jews and as Israelis can not afford to lose anymore. After 40 years of occupation, it is time for all of us to be liberated.

[32] Dan Kurtzer: Washington reassessing its role, in „bitterlemons“ 17.05.2007:
For nearly 40 years, the United States has fancied itself the most important "third party" in the Israel-Arab peace process. Some administrations have adopted ambitious approaches to peace-making in which the US president and/or the secretary of state have involved themselves directly and in detail in negotiations. Other administrations have adopted less ambitious approaches, often the result of circumstances assessed to be unpropitious for achieving progress toward peace. US failures in the peace process during the past decade or more have given rise to the possibility of a gradual but fundamental reassessment by the United States of its primary mediating role. If this gradual shift proves real, it will have profound consequences for Arabs and Israelis.
Several factors accounted for the US role in previous Arab-Israel peace efforts. First, the US perceived such engagement as being a vital national self-interest, that is, it was a means of extending US power and prestige and blocking the aggressive

aims of adversaries such as the Soviet Union or, more recently, Iran. Second, the US believed that peace was desirable, possible and necessary for the long-term well-being of the Middle East, a region of significant strategic importance to it. Third, the US has enjoyed a special relationship with Israel, and always perceived a strong interest on the part of Israeli governments to reach peace accommodations with all its neighbors.
In seeking to fulfill these self-interests, the US always brought important assets to the table in its role as a mediator. US offers of economic and military assistance often helped seal a deal between the parties. Similarly, US political assurances were taken very seriously by all the parties, especially those that related to final status issues such as the question of Palestinian self-determination, the necessity of a viable and territorially-contiguous Palestinian state, the future of settlement blocs, the fate of Palestinian refugees, the issue of Jerusalem and the best ways of enhancing security for Israel and its neighbors. The US also often brought ingenuity, creativity or muscle to the table, attributes that were no less important than the tangible economic, military and political commitments it was prepared to make.
Given this extended period of US primacy in mediation and the panoply of skills and assets the US mustered in support of its mediating role, the central question now is why the US no longer seems interested in helping the parties get to negotiations, implement agreements already reached and bring forth new agreements on the road to a final peace settlement. Has the US lost interest in the peace process? Has the US assessment of peace – its desirability, possibility and necessity – changed? And if the US does not play a key mediating role, can a peace settlement be reached?
For the current administration, two primary considerations have underpinned a reticence to get too deeply involved in peace-making. President George W. Bush believed that his predecessor, President Bill Clinton, had weakened the power of the presidency through repeated, failed efforts at peace. Bush assessed that presidents have only so much political capital to spend and from the outset he had other priorities. In this respect, 9/11 only reinforced Bush's predispositions in that he saw the Israel-Palestine conflict through the prism of terrorism-counterterrorism. These considerations could have been subjected to review after the death of Yasser Arafat, when an opportunity arose to invest heavily not only in stopping the violence but also in getting the two sides back to the negotiating table. However, the Bush administration remained on the sidelines, supportive of Israel's disengagement policy, active in trying to resolve relatively small on-the-ground problems, but reticent to touch the more important issues, particularly those associated with final status. It is this reticence – at a time when the parties themselves and the larger Arab world appeared anxious for a helping hand back to peace-making – that suggests that the Bush administration is changing the US strategic outlook, not just hesitating to get involved while the two sides fight. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's latest foray into the Israel-Palestine dispute initially appeared to counter this strategic shift, but its lackadaisical style and limited ambition actually reinforce the trend of US policy.
With US elections in late 2008, the parties in the region will need to factor into their own strategies this evolving but increasingly clear US approach. They will face two stark choices between now and November 2008: either go it alone in bilateral engagement and bilateral negotiations, or find an alternative third party to provide the off-the-table benefits previously provided by the US. Neither of these appears very realistic, and thus the peace process has a vacancy for a mediator.

[33] Der Vertrag von Mekka befindet sich in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente“ dieser Homepage.

[34] Yoav Stern: New Israeli Arab declaration: Israel must own up to Nakba, in „Haaretz“-online 15.05.2007:
A group of Israeli Arab intellectuals are calling on Israel to recognize its responsibility for the Nakba ("The Catastrophe," the Palestinians' term for what happened to them after 1948) and to act to implement the Palestinian refugees' right of return and establishment of a Palestinian state.

These moves will pave the way to a historic reconciliation between the Jewish nation in Israel and the Palestinian people, says a position paper entitled "The Haifa Declaration" published in Haaretz for the first time today.
The composers urge Israel to become a democratic state that upholds "national equality" between Jews and Arabs.
The demands in the Haifa Declaration are similar to those made in previous position papers and consist first and foremost of abolishing the Jewish state.
"A democratic state based on equality between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs in Israel will ensure both groups' rights in a just and egalitarian way," it posits.
This is the fourth position paper released by leading organizations of the Arab community in Israel in recent months. It follows the Ten Points of the Mossawa Center, The Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel, The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel of the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee and the Democratic Constitution of the Adalah Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel.
The declaration distinguishes between Jews who live in Israel and those who are not Israelis. The Arab minority is defined as a "homeland minority," which is entitled to many rights according to the international law. Israel is accused in the paper of trying over the years to "distort" the identity of the Arab s in Israel.
The declaration demands canceling the laws of immigration (Law of Return) and citizenship (that prevent Israeli Arabs from marrying Palestinians). It demands a veto right for Arabs in all matters pertaining to their status and to ensure them cultural autonomy. The resources must be distributed on "principles of justice and affirmative action."
The paper was written by figures identified with various parties, including Balad and Hadash, but not with the Islamic movement. Professor Nadim Rouhana, director of Mada al-Carmel – Arab Center for Applied Social Research, who spearheaded the initiative to write the document, said yesterday that the project was sparked by the prevalent feeling that the Israeli Arabs were being overlooked by the Israeli bodies working on a constitution.
"We are not immigrants. We see ourselves as owners of this place, even if we recognize the Jewish nation in Israel, and we have reached the conclusion that we must think of our place in our homeland," he said.
The writers decided to publish the paper on May 15, Nakba Day. It describes the event as a seminal one that established the negative relationship between the Arab citizens and the state.
"Following the event we, the remainder of the original homeland residents, became bereft of real citizenship and especially of equality," it says.
The paper castigates tribalism in Arab society, which it says facilitated Israel's "divide and rule" strategy, which "strengthened the discourse based on tribal, parochial zealotry."

[35] Der Text des TIM findet sich in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente” dieser Homepage.

[36] Nicholas D. Kristof: Diplomacy at Its Worst, in “New York Times” 14.05.2007:
In May 2003, Iran sent a secret proposal to the U.S. for settling our mutual disputes in a “grand bargain.”
It is an astonishing document, for it tries to address a range of U.S. concerns about nuclear weapons, terrorism and Iraq. I’ve placed it and related documents (including multiple drafts of it) on my blog www.nytimes.com/ontheground.
Hard-liners in the Bush administration killed discussions of a deal, and interviews with key players suggest that was an appalling mistake. There was a real hope for peace; now there is a real danger of war.
Scattered reports of the Iranian proposal have emerged previously, but if you read the full documentary record you’ll see that what the hard-liners killed wasn’t just one faxed Iranian proposal but an entire peace process. The record indicates that officials from the repressive, duplicitous government of Iran pursued peace more energetically and diplomatically than senior Bush administration officials – which makes me ache for my country.
The process began with Afghanistan in 2001-2. Iran and the U.S., both opponents of the Taliban, cooperated closely in stabilizing Afghanistan and providing aid, and

unofficial “track two” processes grew to explore opportunities for improved relations.
On the U.S. side, track two involved well-connected former U.S. ambassadors, including Thomas Pickering, Frank Wisner and Nicholas Platt. The Iranian ambassador to the U.N., Javad Zarif, was a central player, as was an Iranian-American professor at Rutgers, Hooshang Amirahmadi, who heads a friendship group called the American Iranian Council.
At a dinner the council sponsored for its board at Ambassador Zarif’s home in September 2002, the group met Iran’s foreign minister, Kamal Kharrazi. According to the notes of Professor Amirahmadi, the foreign minister told the group, “Yes, we are ready to normalize relations,” provided the U.S. made the first move.
This was shaping into a historic opportunity to heal U.S.-Iranian relations, and the track two participants discussed further steps, including joint U.S.-Iranian cooperation against Saddam Hussein. The State Department and National Security Council were fully briefed, and in 2003 Ambassador Zarif met with two U.S. officials, Ryan Crocker and Zalmay Khalilzad, in a series of meetings in Paris and Geneva.
Encouraged, Iran transmitted its “grand bargain” proposals to the U.S. One version was apparently a paraphrase by the Swiss ambassador in Tehran; that was published this year in The Washington Post.
But Iran also sent its own master text of the proposal to the State Department and, through an intermediary, to the White House. I’ve also posted that document, which Iran regards as the definitive one.
In the master document, Iran talks about ensuring “full transparency” and other measures to assure the U.S. that it will not develop nuclear weapons. Iran offers “active Iranian support for Iraqi stabilization.” Iran also contemplates an end to “any material support to Palestinian opposition groups” while pressuring Hamas “to stop violent actions against civilians within” Israel (though not the occupied territories). Iran would support the transition of Hezbollah to be a “mere political organization within Lebanon” and endorse the Saudi initiative calling for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
Iran also demanded a lot, including “mutual respect,” abolition of sanctions, access to peaceful nuclear technology and a U.S. statement that Iran did not belong in the “axis of evil.” Many crucial issues, including verification of Iran’s nuclear program, needed to be hammered out. It’s not clear to me that a grand bargain was reachable, but it was definitely worth pursuing – and still is today.
Instead, Bush administration hard-liners aborted the process. Another round of talks had been scheduled for Geneva, and Ambassador Zarif showed up – but not the U.S. side. That undermined Iranian moderates.
A U.S.-Iranian rapprochement could have saved lives in Iraq, isolated Palestinian terrorists and encouraged civil society groups in Iran. But instead the U.S. hard-liners chose to hammer plowshares into swords.

[37] Avi Shlaim: It is not only God that will be Blair’s judge over Iraq, in “The Guardian” 14.05.2007:
His cravenly pro-US policy on the Middle East misunderstood Bush's real agenda and resulted in catastrophic failure.
Tony Blair's opposition to an immediate ceasefire in the Lebanon war last summer precipitated his downfall. Now that he has announced the date of his departure from Downing Street, his entire Middle East record needs to be placed under an uncompromising lens.
Blair came to office with no experience of, and virtually no interest in, foreign affairs, and ended by taking this country to war five times. Blair boasts that his foreign policy was guided by the doctrine of liberal interventionism. But the war in Iraq is the antithesis of liberal intervention. It is an illegal, immoral and unnecessary war, a war undertaken on a false prospectus and without sanction from the UN.
Blair's entire record in the Middle East is one of catastrophic failure. He used to portray Britain as a bridge between the two sides of the Atlantic. By siding with America against Europe on Iraq, however, he helped to destroy the bridge.
Preserving the special relationship with America was the be all and end all of Blair's foreign policy. He presumably supported the Bush administration over Iraq in the hope of exercising influence on its policy. Yet there is no evidence that he exercised

influence on any significant policy issue. His support for the neoconservative agenda on Iraq was uncritical and unconditional.
Blair failed to understand that America's really special relationship is with Israel, not Britain. Every time that George Bush had to choose between Blair and Ariel Sharon, he chose the latter. Blair's special relationship with Bush was a one-way street: Blair made all the concessions and got nothing tangible in return.
American policy towards the Middle East was doomed to failure from the start, and the end result has been to saddle Britain with a share of the responsibility for this failure. The premise behind American policy was that Iraq was the main issue in Middle East politics and that regime change in Baghdad would weaken the Palestinians and force them to accept a settlement on Israel's terms. The road to Jerusalem, it was argued, went through Baghdad. This premise was wrong. Iraq was a non-issue; it did not pose a threat to any of its neighbours, and certainly not to America or Britain. The real issue was Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories and America's support for Israel in its savage colonial war against the Palestinian people.
When seeking the approval of the Commons for the war, Blair pledged that after Iraq was disarmed, he and his American friends would seek a solution to the Palestine problem. He has utterly failed to deliver on this promise.
True, Blair was the driving force behind the "road map" that envisaged the emergence of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel by the end of 2005. But Sharon wrecked the road map. In return for the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, Sharon exacted a written American agreement to Israel's retention of the major settlement blocs on the West Bank. Blair publicly endorsed the nefarious Sharon-Bush pact. This was the most egregious British betrayal of the Palestinians since the Balfour declaration of 1917.
Blair and Bush have also betrayed the Iraqi people. To begin with, there was much brave rhetoric about bringing democracy to Iraq and turning it into a model for the rest of the Arab world. But the rhetoric was empty. The neoconservatives who drove American policy were interested in overthrowing Saddam Hussein and in nothing else.
The allied invasion of Iraq was not an isolated episode but part of the so-called global war on terror. But the overthrow of the Ba'ath regime in Iraq only exacerbated the problem of terrorism. The invasion of Iraq has given a powerful boost to al-Qaida and its confederates by damaging Britain's reputation and radicalising its young Muslims. The London bombs may not have been a direct result of the Iraq war – but they are indisputably a part of the blowback.
What we have in Iraq today is chronic instability, an incipient civil war, endemic violence and anarchy, an upsurge of terrorist activity of every kind, and a national insurgency to which the allies have no answer. The neocons did not bother to plan for postwar reconstruction. Occupation was accompanied by devastation and destruction on a massive scale and a civilian death toll estimated by one source at 655,000.
The allies pride themselves on having brought democracy to the Iraqi people, but they have failed in the primary duty of any government: to provide security for the civilian population. The upshot is that America and its pillion passenger in the "war against terror" are now embroiled in a vicious, protracted and unwinnable conflict.
Blair has the audacity to say that God will be his judge over the Iraq war. This is a curious attitude for a democratic politician to adopt. History will surely pass a harsh judgment on Blair. He has the worst record on the Middle East of any British prime minister in the past century, infinitely worse than that of Anthony Eden, who at least had the decency to accept responsibility for the Suez debacle.
Avi Shlaim is a professor of international relations at St Antony's College, Oxford, and author of The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World.

[38] Tzipi Livni: „The majority of Israelis agree on targets, and disputes are just about tactics, Interview in “Al-Ahram” 13.05.2007:
Q: Yesterday you met the Speaker of the Italian Parliament even though he saw some Hamas members, while PM Olmert did not see him. Does that mean there are deep differences between you and the PM or was this planned role-playing?
A: Not at all, please don't look for nonexistent differences. As far as relations with the Palestinians are concerned we agreed that any Palestinian cabinet must comply

with international demands, so Israel does not differentiate between Hamas and other cabinet members. Our government decided – and I agreed – that visitors who meet Hamas will not be welcome in Israel, but in this case the Italian speaker addressed the Palestinian parliament where there were some Hamas members.
Q: Can one say that arguments about the best way to deal with the Arab peace plan are part of the reasons for the present political crisis in Israel, and if so what do you think personally is the best way of dealing with the peace plan?
A: I represent the present government in Israel – and the majority of the country. As for the peace process with the Palestinians, we all share the same target – that of two states living in peace side by side, and we see the need to promote the peace process. As for government policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, we are agreed on aims. Sometimes there are differences as to the best way of reaching those aims, but these are tactical. Most Israelis share the same aspirations for a peace based on two states.
Q: We understand from recent developments that you are running for prime minister...
A: I came to this meeting to discuss events in the region and bilateral ties but I am surprised by questions on matters inside Israel.
Q: But this is relevant to what goes on in the region.
A: I came here as Foreign Minister, I like my job, there is much to do as a foreign minister in the cause of peace.
Q: In your estimation can we expect in the near future an Israeli leadership that, like the Persian King Cyrus who liberated the Jews from Babylonian imprisonment, will move to broach a peace process with the Arabs, armed with a new philosophy of peace?
A: Most of the Israeli people know that peace is needed and that it can be reached by compromise. In this context I represent the majority view that calls for two states, one Jewish, the other Palestinian, meaning that the way to a Palestinian state begins by abjuring terror – which is in the best interest of Palestinians as well as Israelis. To return to your question, which assumes that such an Israeli leadership does not exist – I object to such an assumption. Israel has made concessions and brave steps such as her withdrawal from the Gaza strip and the removal of all settlements there, thus sending a message to the Palestinians that we mean what we say.
Q: Whatever,... but Gaza was a burden to Israel...
A: I repeat: The decision to uproot seven thousand settlers from Gaza, many of whom were born there, was brave, painful and hard. But we wanted to send a message to the Palestinians and the world that we were serious. We didn't want to rule the Palestinians nor get into a battle with terror because that is a burden. Our withdrawal comes out of a conception of peace. If the peace process is delayed it is not because of Israeli unreadiness, but because the moderate Palestinians who want a two-state solution are incapable of overcoming violence. As a representative of the Israeli majority I can assure you that Gaza was not the last step. Setting up a Palestinian state will oblige us to further withdrawals.
Q: From this vantage point in Cairo it seems that the present crisis in Israel began with Israeli aggression against Lebanon. Could that crisis lead to further aggression against Lebanon?
A: Israel supported UN Security Council Resolution 1701 which benefits the interests of Israel and all countries of the region that seek Lebanese stability and sovereignty, but we suspect that Hizbullah actually promotes the interests of Iran. With this in mind we carried out our military operations and supported Resolution 1701 with the aim of seeing Lebanese sovereignty over all its southern territory, and the dissolution of Hizbullah – which we hope will yet happen.
Q: But if it does not happen could there be renewed aggression against Lebanon?
A: I don't like hypothetical questions. If matters do not develop [as wished], we will do what is needed to defend Israel.
Q: You have just marked 59 years since the end of British occupation. If occupation per se is an affront to human rights, what do you have to say about your occupation of Arab lands?
A: Following the 1967 war we thought that peaceful coexistence with the Palestinians between the sea and the Jordan River was possible without ruling over them. Today we see the answer lies in partition between two states. This answers

the needs of the Jews as well as those of the Arabs of Gaza, the West Bank and the 1948 refugees. But terrorism compels us to remain in those areas. What we plan now – unlike in Gaza – is to withdraw after negotiating with the Palestinians, plus having security arrangements. As for your reference to British rule, we have no imperialist ambitions but only security needs, and we have to reach agreement.
Q: If the Arabs are offering peace and normal relations while Israel is confiscating West Bank lands, what can Israel offer the Arabs?
A: I object to your assumptions.
Q: But you are in fact confiscating!
A: Let me say that Israel, moderate Palestinians and Arabs are agreed that there must be a two-state solution. The borders between Israel and the Palestine state will be negotiated in future talks. It is not Israeli policy to stall the peace process. The Camp David talks in 2000 broke down in violence. Had they succeeded, the Palestinians would be celebrating their 7th anniversary by now.
Q: But on only 60% of the West Bank...
A: You are talking about the future area of the Palestinian state. I am saying that they could have been celebrating already seven years of independence and liberty. Note that any solution must be based on compromise by all sides. We will not turn history back to before Israel was established. Israel is a fact. We look forward to the day when a Palestinian state will exist based on shared principles and values that include the end of violence.
Q: Constitutions usually define state borders. Does yours? Does it include the Golan Heights?
A: Israeli law applies to the Golan.
Q: Meaning that it is inside your borders?
A: We do not have a constitution. There were the post-1948 lines and then came the 1967 war in which Israel took the territories, which we did not annex. They are the subject of our dispute with the Palestinians. The eventual borders between Israel and the Palestinians will be settled by negotiation.
Q: In 2001-2, Minister Avigdor Lieberman made an unprovoked attack on Egypt and said the Aswan Dam should be destroyed. I recall hearing from Ministers [Tzachi] Hanegbi and [Ehud] Olmert at that time that the man was an extremist and was forced out of the cabinet and would never be allowed back. So we were surprised when last year PM Olmert brought him back as minister with an even higher rank than before. What then is the nature of the new reshuffle, how do you expect Egyptians to react, and what would you say if an Egyptian cabinet Minister said such things about Israel?
A: What matters is the policy of the Israeli leadership that seeks peace with the Palestinians and Egypt. In joining the cabinet, Lieberman accepted that leadership. Regrettably there are some Egyptian members of parliament who are against Israel. But relations are maintained between governments that follow guidelines and these are binding on coalition members.
Q: There will always be spies, but Egyptians ask: If there is peace between us, why the espionage?
A: Let me then address the Egyptian public and tell them what the Israeli public feels. We have a peace treaty and we want to live in real peace with Egypt, whose role in the Arab world and in peace efforts with the Palestinians is appreciated. Israel is ready for compromises, more so than in the past. I think that old stereotypes about Israel must change. There is a huge gap between imagery and the facts about Israel, and that too is an obstacle to peace. I know that in other places, too, outside Egypt, Israel is sometimes seen as the enemy, as wanting to rule the Palestinians – and that is not true. As for your question about espionage, it has little to do with facts. The important thing is for us to work together and seek common values.

[39] Quelle: www.n-tv.de, 13.05.2007: Kritik an deutschem Botschafter Der Offene Brief im Wortlaut:
Der Abgeordnete Yoel Hasson von der regierenden Kadimah-Partei hat den deutschen Botschafter in Israel, Harald Kindermann, heftig kritisiert. Im folgenden der Wortlaut seines offenen Briefes:
An seine Excellenz Dr. Harald Kindermann, Botschafter Deutschlands, Tel Aviv

Exzellenz, Ich war erstaunt, kürzlich Ihre Rolle als Vertreter des Rates der EU zu entdecken, wonach Sie an der Speerspitze einer gemeinschaftlichen Protest-Initiative stehen, gegen eine Sondersitzung der Knesset aus Anlass der 40-jährigen Vereinigung der Hauptstadt des Staates Israel, Jerusalem.
Die Tatsache, dass Deutschland als Ratspräsident eine Protestinitiative gegen die Feierstunde aus Anlass der Repatriierung unserer Hauptstadt anführt, halte ich für respektlos. Jerusalem ist für immer die vereinigte Hauptstadt der jüdischen Nation. Die Europäische Union, die Regierung Deutschlands und ihr Repräsentant in Israel wären gut beraten, diese Tatsache anzuerkennen und zu bestätigen.
Falls Sie, als Vertreter der Präsidentschaft der EU, beabsichtigen, die diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen unseren Nationen zu verbessern, wieso ist dann die deutsche Regierung nicht daran interessiert, die delikaten Beziehungen zwischen den europäischen Nationen und dem Staat Israel zu verbessern. Ihre Aktionen untergraben vielmehr die guten Beziehungen zwischen unseren Ländern. Die Europäische Union und die deutsche Regierung könnten eine historische Gelegenheit wahrnehmen, Fehler der Vergangenheit zurecht zu rücken, indem sie das Heim für das jüdische Volk mit seiner unumstrittenen Hauptstadt bestätigen, an der Sitzung der Knesset teilnehmen und andere auffordern, zu folgen. So könnten Sie der Hauptstadt des Staates Israel und seinem Volk Respekt erweisen. Sie könnten so einen Beitrag leisten, die Beziehungen zwischen den Europäern und Israel zu überbrücken, anstatt uns weiter auseinander zu rücken.
Knessetmitglied Yoel Hasson
Vgl. den Beitrag von Judith Bernstein „Holocaust und Nahostkonflikt“ in der Homepage www.reiner-bernstein.de.

[40] Forty years of ‚unity', in „Haaretz“-online 16.05.2007:
What a pity that we can't convert into shekels the lip service public figures have been paying for 40 years to the slogan "united Jerusalem." The sea of words that has been spilled over the biblical reference to Jerusalem as a city that has been "joined together" could have filled the deep and gaping chasm between East Jerusalem and West Jerusalem.
As every year, the joy of Jerusalem Day, which is commemorated today, will skip over a significant portion of the city's residents. All that is left of the annexation of Palestinian neighborhoods to the western, Israeli part of Jerusalem is a dry Knesset law, government decisions that lack substance, and the blue national identity cards that symbolize Israeli residency.
Jerusalem Day reminds a third of the 730,000 residents of the ostensibly united city that they are second-class citizens – or, worse still, a "demographic problem." Israel has separated them from their brothers in the West Bank and has made no effort to give them the feeling that they are wanted here.
After listening to the flowery speeches of the politicians and city leaders about the removal of barriers between the eastern and western sections of Jerusalem, the celebrants are advised to cross the line that marked the city's border until the Six-Day War. A few hundred meters from the Western-looking areas of West Jerusalem, they will discover neglected neighborhoods and dilapidated infrastructure, poverty and overcrowding, unemployment and despair. These are the outcome of 40 years of deliberate discrimination. In practice, more than 30 percent of Jerusalem's population receives just 10 percent of the city's budget.
In the new neighborhoods established for the Jewish population in the "united Jerusalem," not one child stays home because of a shortage of classrooms. By contrast, some 15,000 children in East Jerusalem are not registered with the education authorities in the city due to a shortage of more than 1,300 classrooms. It's no wonder that half the high school students in East Jerusalem drop out of school.
East Jerusalem is also home to 75.8 percent of the poor children in the city. Some 22 percent of East Jerusalem residents – about 31,600 people – are under the care of the municipality's welfare services, and 62 percent of families there live below the poverty line.
The construction of the West Bank separation fence has allowed the government to revise the borders of Jerusalem, which were drawn in the heat of the city's capture, and separate from hastily annexed Arab neighborhoods. However, the politicians are sticking to their shallow slogans. Fearing that their rivals will accuse them of

dividing Jerusalem, they perpetuate the deprivation of a third of its residents; some 55,000 East Jerusalem Arabs who hold blue identity cards and live in the "Jerusalem envelope" area have found themselves on the other side of the fence, cut off from the city's municipal center.
Ehud Barak was the first prime minister who suggested dividing the city based on the principle of what the Jews have the Jews get, and what the Arabs have the Arabs get. The Clinton plan, the Geneva Accord and the Arab peace initiative also propose a similar basis for dividing the city. It would befit Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who was a senior partner to the failure when he served as mayor of Jerusalem, to replace the slogan of unity with a reasonable and fair policy for division of the city.

[41] Nadav Shragai: Poll: 96% of Israeli Jews won't give up Western Wall for peace, in „Haaretz"-online 13.06.2007:
Ninety-six percent of Israeli Jews are against Israel relinquishing the Western Wall, even in exchange for lasting peace and ending the dispute over Jerusalem, a new poll suggests. According to the poll, most Israeli Jews do not believe territorial concessions in Jerusalem would bring peace.
The poll, performed at the request of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, also reveals that 89 percent of Israeli Jews are unwilling to give up the Temple Mount for a similar arrangement.
The poll, which was performed by the Tazpit Research Institute headed by Dr. Aharon Fein, found that Israeli Jews were far more willing to give up the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, as long as Israel keeps the Western Wall and the Jewish Quarter – an arrangement favored by 43 percent of them.
Forty-three percent of participants said they were opposed to any form of concession in Jerusalem for real peace and the termination of the dispute. In the previous survey on the matter, only 37 percent of the participants were opposed to all forms of territorial concession in Jerusalem.
Religious and ultra-Orthodox participants expressed less willingness for concessions than their secular and traditional counterparts. For example, the survey showed that 76 percent of the religious participants were opposed to territorial concessions, as opposed to 24 percent of secular responders.
Despite the relatively high willingness among participants to give up the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem, most participants nonetheless indicated they did not believe such concessions would bring peace. In total, 75.7 percent believe peace is unattainable. Only 20.3 said they believed peace could be reached in return for territorial concessions in Jerusalem.
In addition, 91.5 percent indicated they believed that maintaining a large Jewish majority in Jerusalem was imperative. Some 81.3 percent said they believed that a mostly-Jewish Jerusalem would complement Israel's moral fortitude. Another 62.4 percent said they believed that Jewish settlement in Ma'ale Adumim and Gush Etzion serve to strengthen Jerusalem.
Sixty-six percent said the same about settlement west of the city. Some 61.3 percent expressed support for prioritizing Jerusalem so as to strengthen its status and standing.
According to the survey, the majority of Israelis regard Jerusalem as the most beautiful city in Israel. Some 81.4 of the Jerusalemites who participated said they perceived it as such, along with 67.5 of non-Jerusalemites. Despite this, 51.8 percent of Jerusalemites define the city as dirty, opposed to only 30 percent of non-Jerusalemites.
Some 47.3 percent of the Jerusalemites who participated in the poll defined the city as impoverished. Another 54 percent said they believed Jerusalem was gradually becoming more ultra-Orthodox. However, despite their critical approach of their city, only 5.3 of Jerusalemites said they considered it dangerous to visit.
By contrast, non-Jerusalemites appear to be more wary of visiting the city, with 14.5 percent indicating it as a dangerous place to visit.

[42] Text des Berichts in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente" dieser Homepage.

[43] Meir Shalev. Not Only in War You Failed – Also in Peace Making – Address by Meir Shalev at the Peace rally in Tel Aviv on Thursday, May 3, 2007, in "Yediot Aharonot", May 4, 2007, translation by Adam Keller ("Gush Shalom"):
Note of the editor: It was by no stretch of the imagination a peace demonstration. The only common denominator was wanting to get rid of Olmert (and of [Amir] Peretz, though that was rather a sideshow). Settlers with their nationalist t-shirts and orange ribbons were evident in the crowd, and some of the speakers from the podium wanted Olmert to go mainly "in order to let the next war end with a real knockout for the enemy". Yossi Beilin's having endorsed the rally jointly with the arch-racist Effie Eitam was not entirely welcome even to members of Beilin's own Meretz Party, and quite a few activists felt no inclination to take any part in this affair. Still, in his keynote speech author Meir Shalev did succeed in momentarily dividing this false "national unity" rally into roughly equal amounts of clapping and booing. He said things which rarely get said to such a large audience – the crowd on the Rabin Square, as well as all those who followed the live radio and TV broadcasts, and on the following the day the readers Israel's biggest paper.
Mr. Prime Minister, you said that you are working for us? Well, you are fired. Mr. Defence Minister, you said that ["Hezballah" Secretary General] Nasrallah will never forget your name? Neither shall we.
We were not surprised. We were just confirmed in what we felt since the day the two of you [Olmert and Peretz] took power, both of you taking up the wrong roles. The Winograd Report just confirmed what we knew without doubt since the day you took us to the Second Lebanon War: that the jobs you took up were far too much for you.
You failed, and you must go home. We don't ask for compensations, nor do we demand a public "mea culpa". Not for your lack of rational consideration before rushing into war, nor for your arrogance. Just go. Headless tyros, you have jumped into battle without a plan or aim. You have entered history as leaders who were caught with their trousers down in a war of their own making.
And you did not even learn a lesson. Even today, even after the Winograd Report, you are spending far more time, far more thought and energy to defending your political position than you ever gave to the war which you initiated.
Here, in this square, many of the crowd are university students and their parents, demanding – and rightly – a reduction of the tuition fees [at the universities]. But we are also paying the tuition fees of you two, and they are exorbitant. They are paid not only in money, but also in suffering and the loss of hope.
You have failed. You have failed, and we will pay no more of your tuition fees. You have failed – and unlike in the University, you will not get a chance at a repeated examination.
Go home. Be gone – for your arrogance, your rashness, your terrible wastefulness. You have wasted the good will of the citizens of Israel, their willingness to volunteer, their sacrifice, their strength, their faith, their endurance.
You have wasted Israel's deterrence.
You have wasted the prisoners' chances to return home.
Worst of all, you have wasted the lives of soldiers and civilians, and the health of those who got wounded.
You have taken up, wholly and without any criticism, the faulty strategy offered by the Army Chief of Staff [Dan Halutz]. You did not make any effort to look for yourselves at the available forces and see if they could truly implement the missions assigned, you did not look for any alternatives. You did not understand the reality in which we live.
The poor people on the home front needed to endure, together with the Katyusha rockets, also your economic policy of privatization and trodding upon the weakest in society. No wonder that the war looked as it looked. Every war is terrible – your addition helped make it even more terrible.
When the leadership is corrupt and ministers spend their time under police investigation, no wonder that the war looked as it looked. Thank you!
When the army is busy manning checkpoints and conducting detentions [of Palestinians], and guarding illegal settlement outposts, no wonder that the war looked as it looked.
You have succeeded to give even politics a bad name. And that is why there is a message and a demand emanating today out of the Rabin Square [in Tel Aviv]. A

demand for responsibility and for a vision. Yes, a vision – however outdated and unfashionable this word sounds. We will not settle for promises of correction and reconstruction, certainly not when you are the ones making such promises. We demand a vision of talks and reconciliation which are absolutely unable to deliver. For you are not only unable to conduct war – also making peace is far beyond your power.
Mr. Prime Minister and Mr. Defence Minster – this war which you brought upon us is far from the first indication of our situation after forty years of occupation and settlement, but it helps us understand the situation better. Forty years of occupation are forty years of no education, no health, no personal security, no welfare, and also no proper military training – and the result is all too visible. But the urgent need for a vision to guide us to a better future is something which your successors will have to address, not you. From you we expect and demand just this: go home. Goodbye.

[44] Naomi Chazan: Critical Currents: A new peace constituency, in "Jerusalem Post" 03.05.2007:
The raging leadership crisis, brought to a head by the scathing interim report of the Winograd Committee, has diverted attention from one of the most significant and promising developments in Israeli-Palestinian relations. Quietly, persistently and creatively, a revived peace front is being consolidated. This multifaceted coalition is securing the civic foundations for a serious effort to resolve the conflict. It is also, in important respects, a harbinger of its main contours.
The number and diversity of joint Palestinian-Israeli initiatives, put on hold during the height of the second intifada, have expanded considerably during the past couple of years. They have gathered momentum in recent months, as new diplomatic possibilities have emerged and the inability of existing leaders to capitalize on these opportunities has become more pronounced.
These activities have assumed a variety of forms, from networks of human rights organizations, think tanks, veteran peace movements and women's groups, to new formations involving academics, grassroots organizers, local activists, religious leaders and young people.
Alongside the better known work of the Geneva Initiative, the Peres Center for Peace, the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), Gush Shalom and the Jerusalem Link (to mention but a few), it is possible find literally dozens of associations today. These include not only the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace (IWC) and Combatants for Peace, but also specialized strategic planning units, militant protest groups and cultural workshops.
The sheer number of Israeli-Palestinian interchanges currently taking place is startling, given not only the extent of animosity fomented by the ongoing violence, but also the immense logistical obstacles impeding face-to-face encounters on the ground. If in the past meetings could be held easily on the outskirts of Jerusalem, the completion of the municipal wall precludes this possibility. For more than a year, Gaza residents, with minor exceptions, have been unable to reach the West Bank, where internal mobility is severely impaired by roadblocks and multiple checkpoints. For Israelis, in turn, it is illegal to go to these areas.
Nevertheless, some entry permits for Palestinians have been issued and other, often ingenious, alternatives for communication have been elaborated. These include a multiplicity of electronic channels (e-mails, video conferences, chat groups, Skype) as well as the ubiquitous and overused cellphone. When all local options have been exhausted, meetings are convened abroad. Several such conferences or consultations have taken place virtually every week during the past year.
These encounters tend to focus on four main topics. The first is substantive, centering on developing ideas not only on permanent settlement, but also on the nature of future relations between Palestinians and Israelis. The second is procedural, concentrating on generating innovative ways to jump-start and sustain a viable diplomatic process. The third is organizational, designing means to work together to expand the ideological and sociological representation of those involved in peacemaking. And the fourth is humanitarian, dealing specifically with immediate

measures to alleviate suffering and increase mutual confidence (such as lifting the economic embargo and expediting a prisoner exchange).
A spate of reports, resolutions, appeals and recommendations has emanated from these efforts. They are being scrutinized by decision makers and discussed in various forums locally and internationally. In all probability, they will be widely disseminated during the coming weeks at multiple events scheduled to mark 40 years of the occupation. Together, they form a sound and crafted infrastructure for a full-fledged peace process.
These resurgent conflict resolution initiatives possess several novel characteristics which distinguish them from their 1990s predecessors. Their composition is much more heterogeneous, involving diverse sectors of each population and a spate of political actors not previously part of such interchanges. Their range is much broader, including regional and international components alongside bilateral ones. Their positions are clearer, focusing squarely on how to bring an end to the occupation and translate the two-state vision into a reality.
Two features, however, stand out: the fact that Israelis and Palestinians active in these frameworks are speaking together with one voice, and that they encompass decision makers alongside civil society activists. Indeed, what is unique to the contemporary peace landscape is the emergence of a shared constituency which crosses national divisions and is united in its determination to thwart extremism and chart a workable course for coexistence.
It is all too easy, in the midst of constant warmongering and deep despair, to dismiss these organized signs of positive change. It is equally tempting to cynically ignore their implications as violence continues to flare and elected leaders are exposed in all their ineptness.
It would be a grave error to do so.
Although this nascent peace coalition cannot replace a committed and functional leadership, it can lay the building blocks for rational interaction and create a climate for eventual reconciliation. It also provides what is sorely missing today: the moral and political impetus to compel whoever is in office to move forward.
Ultimately, once good sense prevails at the apex, this civilian partnership for peace will offer a much-needed guarantee for the successful implementation of any durable agreement.

[45] Der Wortlaut der Presseerklärung findet sich in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente" dieser Homepage.

[46] Dear friends, I wanted to send you a brief word describing my position on the findings of the Winograd Committee and its meaning for the Meretz-Yahad Party, for the peace camp, and for Israel.
The findings of the report, which is itself a partial report that focuses only on the first five days of the Second Lebanon War, constitute a harsh indictment of Israel's prime minister, defense minister, and former chief of staff. The failure of all three men in managing the crisis that erupted last July with the abduction of two Israeli soldiers on the Israel-Lebanon war and which turned into a war that lasted 33 days, is so severe, that the report leaves no question as to what they should do. The chief of staff has already resigned several months ago, and both Prime Minister Olmert and Defense Minister Peretz must follow suit.
With their resignation, a new government should be formed. The likely candidates to head such a government are two senior ministers from within the ruling Kadima Party - Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Vice Premier Shimon Peres. If consensus is formed inside Kadima around one of them, they would be able to form a new coalition and enjoy a majority in the Knesset.
We, in the Meretz-Yahad Party, see our role in fighting for the formation of a better government than the last one, and I believe that either Peres or Livni would be a better prime minister than Olmert. Of course, our support for the new government cannot be taken for granted. The platform of the new government must be in line with what we believe in, and the peace process must take center stage. To this effect, we would do our utmost so that the new coalition does not include the ultra-rightist Yisrael Beitenu of Avigdor Lieberman.
The failure of Olmert and Peretz does not necessitate early elections for parliament. The makeup of the current Knesset, which was voted into office only a year ago, is

a relatively good one. It can offer a stable majority for different political coalitions, with a clear advantage for a center-left coalition. As far as I see it, the current Knesset has not let us down, and it must be given a chance to put forward a new government. There is every reason to believe that a new and better government can be formed.
The next few weeks will bring change to Israel. Our job is to ensure that the change will be a good one.
Yours, Yossi Beilin

[47] Bericht in der Menüleiste „Berichte aus Israel und Palästina" dieser Homepage.

[48] Amir Gilat, Ph..D., Communication and Media Relations, University of Haifa:
Research at the University of Haifa examined the influence of military service on political stance:
Combat soldiers adopt dovish political views Women soldiers become more hawkish Over the course of their military service, combat soldiers become less right wing, adopt more dovish political views and are more open to comprise on security issues – according to research completed in the School for Political Science at the University of Haifa by IDF Reserve Colonel Dr. Zvika Barkai who served as Commander of the Haifa region and head of the Operations Branch of the Home Front Command. Additional parameters that effect change in political views include the specific unit served in, gender and service as an officer. "In the opposite of what would be expected, military service does not cause adopting militaristic views," said Dr. Barkai.
The research was conducted over three and a half years, under the direction of Prof. Avraham Brichta, Dr. Daphna Canetti-Nisim and Dr. Ami Pedahzur, surveyed 490 male and female soldiers of every rank and in every branch of the IDF. Soldiers were asked to respond to the same series of questions at three different times, before induction, six months into their service and immediately following their release. The goal of the research was to evaluate whether the army is in actuality the politically neutral institution that it purports to be and whether it has any effect on soldiers' political views. "It's a problem when the public is convinced that soldiers are coerced into adapting specific political views, sometimes against their will, and to act accordingly. Such a public belief could limit the ability of the government to use the army for nationalist missions," remarked Dr. Barkai.
The research did indeed find that soldiers' political views change over the course of their service, and that the type of service, length of service, rank, and gender influence the change. The initial interviews found that a large percentage of the soldiers began their service with clear right wing views. Six months into their military service they were more right wing, but after completing their service they took on more dovish views and were more willing to compromise on security issues. In addition, these soldiers adopted more conciliatory views towards minorities in general, and more specifically towards the Arab minority, and experienced a greater change in their views about human rights than soldiers who began their service with less extreme views. Over all, when political views did change during military service, they reverted back to the original views after release, with the exception of combat soldiers who maintained more dovish views following their release.
Within the different types of army units, soldiers who served in field units underwent the greatest change in their political views. The research reveals that no only combat soldiers in these units undergo a change; all of the soldiers in field units undergo a change in their political views. Those with hawkish views adopted more moderate views and a raised consciousness for minority rights.
Those who served as officers also underwent a substantial change in their political views. Officers adopted much less right wing and more pragmatic views than enlisted soldiers. In addition, they underwent a greater change in espousing strongly democratic values, adherence to the rule of law and minority rights.
Women, on the other hand, underwent a change in political views – and became more rightwing and hawkish. At the same time, they increased their support for regulation of non-conventional weapons more than male soldiers did.
Women soldiers experienced a greater change in their support of democratic values while men underwent a greater change in the attitude towards human rights and minority relations. "It is important to note that although men underwent a

greater change, their values were almost identical to women's in terms of concern for human rights at the end of their service, as they began with more extreme views," explains Dr. Barkai.
While army service did not affect the level of religious observance among the soldiers, it did improve understandings between religious and non-religious soldiers and increase willingness to compromise on religious issues.
According to Dr. Barkai, the research findings demonstrate that military service does influence political views; therefore civilian authorities need to oversee the values and messages that the army espouses to ascertain that the military works to assimilate only universal, accepted values. Only then will the military be an effective agent for the integration and assimilation of positive values and an agent for bridging and narrowing existing conflicts.
The study results lead the researcher to recommend that minorities and marginalized populations be encouraged to serve in the military. He recommends a large-scale draft of Arabs, increased participation of Druze and Bedouins, ultra-orthodox Jews and religious women and designing special programs for marginalized youth (who are often excused from military service). "Even taking into account that expanding the draft to include the abovementioned groups may have a marginal or even negative effect on the country's security, the latent national gains should be weighed against the security issues – not necessarily by the military," summarized Dr. Barkai.

[49] Amir Oren: U-S. had emergency plan for attacking Israel in 1967, in “Haaretz”-online 23.04.2007:
For some time, the United States had had an emergency plan to attack Israel, a plan updated just prior to the 1967 war, aimed at preventing Israel from expanding westward, into Sinai, or eastward, into the West Bank.
In May 1967, one of the U.S. commands was charged with the task of removing the plan from the safe, refreshing it and preparing for an order to go into action.
This unknown aspect of the war was revealed in what was originally a top-secret study conducted by the Institute for Defense Analyses in Washington. The full story is detailed in Haaretz' Independence Day Supplement.
In February 1968, an institute expert, L. Weinstein, wrote an article called "Critical Incident No. 14," about the U.S. involvement in the Middle East crisis of May-June 1967.Only 30 copies of his study were printed for distribution. Years later the material was declassified and can now be read by everyone, although details that are liable to give away sources' identities and operational ideas have remained censored.
Strike Command, the entity that was to have launched the attack on Israel, no longer exists. It was annulled in 1971 for domestic American reasons and superseded by Readiness Command, which was abolished in the 1980s in favor of Central Command (CENTCOM) which today includes forces in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and Afghanistan; and the Special Operations Command (SOCOM).
The general who oversaw the planning in 1967 was Theodore John ("Ted") Conway, then 56 and a four-star general, the head of Strike Command.
On May 20, 1967, according to L. Weinstein's confidential study for the Institute for Defense Analyses, cable No. 5886 of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was sent to EUCOM and STRICOM. STRICOM was asked to refresh the emergency plans for intervention in an Israeli-Arab war: one plan on behalf of Israel and the other, on behalf of the Arabs.
The basis for the directive was Washington's policy of support for the existence, independence and territorial integrity of all the states of the region. This translated into adherence to the Israeli-Arab armistice lines of 1949. The policy was not to allow Egypt, or any combination of Arab states, to destroy Israel, but also not to allow Israel to expand westward, into Sinai, or eastward, into the West Bank.
The American pressure in this regard brought the IDF back from El Arish in Operation Horev in 1949 and from Sinai in 1956. A version of it would appear in Henry Kissinger's directives after the IDF encircled Egypt's Third Army at the end of the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

Conway replied to the Joint Chiefs cable four days after it was sent. He was doubtful about combat intervention, and preferred an operation to evacuate American civilians from Israel and from Arab states.
The next day, the Joint Chiefs asked Conway for his opinion about how the United States should act if the war were to be launched by an Arab action or, alternatively, by an Israeli strike.
"The ultimate objective would be to stop aggression and insure the territorial integrity of all the Middle Eastern states," he was informed in cable No. 6365 of the Joint Chiefs, with a copy to EUCOM.
Conway's reply to this, dated May 28, is described in the top-secret study as "a strong plea for complete impartiality." The United States was liable to lose its influence to the Soviets, the general warned, and therefore it must demonstrate "strict neutrality" and avoid open support for Israel.
The true importance of the Middle East lay in the American-Soviet context of the Cold War, Conway argued, and the American stance must derive from those considerations, not from "local issues."
Only as a last resort should the United States take unilateral action – and then only to put an end to the fighting. In the estimation of the STRICOM commander, the Egyptian forces were deployed defensively, whereas the Israelis were deployed in rapid-strike offensive capability.
On May 29, Conway recommended that any U.S. intervention be launched early in order to ensure the territorial integrity of all the countries involved; restoring the status quo ante would become more complicated as the attacking army captured more territory.
It might be difficult to determine which side had launched the hostilities, he noted, but the American response should be identical in both cases: a display of force, warnings to both sides, and if that should prove insufficient, "air and naval action to stabilize the situation, enforce grounding of aviation of both sides plus attacks on all moving armor or active artillery."
Following the cease-fire, U.S. ground forces would be moved in for peacekeeping missions. The return of territories would be achieved primarily by diplomatic means, with military force to be used only if "absolutely necessary."
General Earle Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, barred the distribution of the planning concept to subordinate levels. A preliminary paper was prepared by June 5, the day the war erupted, and became outdated even before it could be used.
On June 6, when the success of the Israel Air Force was known, and as the divisions under IDF Generals Israel Tal, Ariel Sharon and Avraham Yoffe advanced into Sinai, the Joint Chiefs sent McNamara top-secret memorandum No. 315-67, recommending that the United States not intervene militarily, that it continue to work through the United Nations and bilateral diplomatic channels, including consultation with the Soviets, to stop the war, and that logistical support for all sides be suspended.
The American sigh of relief at the demise of the worst-case scenario – the danger that Israel would be destroyed – was replaced by the fear that the Arab defeat had been so crushing that the Soviets would intervene on their behalf, or at least would reap a diplomatic profit.
Because the United States did not know what Israel was aiming at, despite declarations by Eshkol and by Defense Minister Moshe Dayan that Israel had no territorial ambitions, the administration "now felt that it was necessary to limit [the Israeli] success to reasonable bounds."
Two retired IDF major generals, Israel Tal and Shlomo Gazit, who was then head of research in Military Intelligence, said recently, upon hearing the secret plan of the U.S. military, that Israel had no knowledge of this.
The IDF fought the Egyptians, the Jordanians and the Syrians without imagining that it might find itself confronting the Americans as well, in their desert camouflage fatigues.

[50] Shlomo Ben-Ami: From radical jihad to the politics of compromise, in “Haaretz”-online 21.04.2007:
It's not surprising that the Mecca agreement and the Palestinian unity government that arose in its wake are thorns in Israel's side. For some time now, useless last-

ditch battles have been a hallmark of Israeli policy on the Palestinian issue. But erosion of the boycott of the Palestinian unity government, perhaps the most popular government on the Palestinian street since 1993, has become evident in many Western capitals. The idea that it's possible to isolate Hamas, to deprive it of its right to govern, to hold a dialogue solely with the "moderates" and to expect that Hamas will accept all agreements and not use its destructive power to torpedo them is unrealistic. Paradoxically, Israel and Hamas share more common ground than is apparent at first glance. The chance of a final status agreement emerging from a direct dialogue with the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mahmoud Abbas, is close to nil. When this becomes clear, and Israel starts searching for a way to return to the idea of withdrawal from the West Bank, it probably won't find a worthier partner than Hamas. Hamas, like Israel, is not ready for the compromises entailed by a final status accord. But a long-term interim agreement is possible only with it, and not with the PLO.
Hamas' transition to parliamentary politics is part of a process many movements from the mainstream of fundamentalist Islam are undergoing today, as they seek to disassociate themselves from global jihad founded by Al-Qaida, and instead seek to integrate themselves in their country's political fabric. In Egypt, this is the direction being taken by the Muslim Brotherhood, and it is also that of Jordan's Islamic Action Front, of the Renaissance Party in Tunisia and of the Justice and Development Party in Morocco.
The United States is winning the war for Arab democracy, but paradoxically, it is declining to reap the rewards because the new image of Islamic political pluralism does not match the illusion of liberal democracy in whose name America sought to change the face of the Middle East. The West, Israel included, and the Arab rulers it has cultivated need to understand that the struggle between political Islam and the conservative regimes needn't be a zero-sum game. The Mecca agreement is not a marginal matter; it is no random, passing event. This was a formative move in the shaping of a new and revolutionary pattern of a division of power between political Islam and the secular regimes in the Arab world. Hamas certainly won't be satisfied with seats in a government under occupation. Its objective is to conquer the PLO from within and to create a different balance between itself and the powers of Palestinian secular nationalism.
This could be the approach in other places, too. In Morocco, Mohammed VI made it clear that he intends to forge "a historic compromise" with political Islam, given the possibility that the Justice and Development Party will be victorious in the country's June elections. The model of national unity that was born in Mecca has become the barrier that is preventing a civil war in the Palestinian Authority. In Algeria, by comparison, the February 2006 Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation was formulated as a tool for ending a bloody civil war which was sparked when the Islamist parties were denied the right to realize their victory in the 1991 elections. The attempt to crush political Islam, as President Mubarak is trying to do via the ban he recently imposed on activity by parties with a religious character, will only increase the anger of the masses, and eventually lead the fundamentalist parties back to terror and communal activism. The stability of Arab regimes that do not rely on a democratic consensus is destined to be deceptive and fragile.
A dialogue with political Islam, in the form of Hamas, for instance, is an unavoidable necessity. Ostracism and banning is a recipe for disaster, as the example of Algeria shows. Creating a space for legitimate political activity by Islamic parties, including recognition of their right to govern, is the way to encourage moderation. The challenge therefore is not to destroy the only Islamic movements that can claim authentic popular support in the Arab world, but rather to solidify their fragile transition from radical jihad to the politics of compromise.

[51] Uri Avnery: The Bed of Sodom, 21.04.2007:
In Hebrew legend, the bed of Sodom is a symbol of evil.
The Bible tells how God decided to obliterate Sodom because of the wickedness of its people (Genesis, 18). The legend gives us an example of this wickedness: the special bed for visitors. When a stranger came to Sodom, he was put in this bed. If he was too tall, his legs were shortened. If he was too short, his limbs were stretched to fit.

In political life, there is more than one bed like this. On the Right and on the Left, there are people who put every problem in such a bed, cut off limbs and stretch limbs, until reality matches theory.
From the sixties on, doctrinaire leftists tended to put every situation into the bed of Vietnam. Everything – be it the murderous tyranny in Chile or the American threats against Cuba – had to fit the Vietnam example. Applying this model, it was easy to decide who were the good guys and who the bad, what to do and how to solve the problem.
That was convenient. It is much easier to draw conclusions when there is no need to consider the complexities of a particular conflict, its historical background and its local circumstances.
Lately, a new bed of Sodom has gained currency: South Africa. In some circles of the radical Left there is a tendency to force every conflict into this bed. Every new case of evil and oppression in the world is seen as a new version of the apartheid regime, and it is decided accordingly how to solve the problem and what to do to achieve the desired end.
True, the South African situation arose in particular historical circumstances that took centuries to mature. It was not identical with the problem of the aborigines in Australia or the settlement of the Whites in North America, nor to Northern Ireland or the situation in Iraq. But it is certainly convenient to give one and the same answer to all problems.
Of course, there is always a superficial similarity between different regimes of oppression. But if one is not ready to see the differences between the diseases, one is liable to prescribe false medicines – and risk killing the patient in the process.
Now this is happening here.
It is easy to put the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the South African bed, since the similarities between the symptoms are obvious. The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories has been going on for 40 years now, and almost 60 years have passed since the Naqba – the armed conflict of 1948 in which the State of Israel came into being and in which more than half the Palestinians lost their homes and land. Relations between the settlers and the Palestinians are in many ways reminiscent of apartheid; and even in Israel proper, the Arab citizens are far from real equality.
What to do? One has to learn from South Africa that there is nothing to be gained from appealing to the conscience of the ruling people. Among the white minority in South Africa, there was no real difference between Left and Right, between open racists and liberals, who were but better disguised racists, with the exception of a few white heroes who joined the fight for freedom.
Therefore, redemption could only come from the outside. And indeed, world public opinion saw the injustice of apartheid and imposed a world-wide boycott on South Africa, till in the end the white minority capitulated. Power in the united South African state passed into the hands of the black majority, Nelson Mandela was released from prison and became president, and all this took place – wonder of wonders – without bloodshed.
If this happened in South Africa, the proponents of this view say, it must happen here, too. The idea of establishing a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel (the "two-state solution") must be discarded, and the single state between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River (the "one-state solution") must become the aim. This must be achieved by the ultimate weapon which proved itself in South Africa: boycott.
This is how it is going to happen: justice-lovers throughout the world will convince world public opinion to impose a general boycott on the State of Israel. The state will collapse and disintegrate. Between the sea and the river there will come into being one single state, in which Israelis and Palestinians will live peacefully together, as equal citizens. The settlers can stay where they are, there will be no problem of borders, and all that remains is to decide who will be the Palestinian Mandela.
This week I listened to a lecture by Professor Ilan Pappe of Haifa University, one of the leading spokesmen for this idea. The audience consisted of Palestinian, Israeli and international activists in Bil'in, the village that has become a symbol of

resistance to the occupation. He presented a well-structured set of ideas, expressed with eloquence and enthusiasm. These were the principles:
There is no sense in opposing just the occupation, nor any other particular policy of the Israeli government. The problem is the very essence of Israel as a Zionist state. This essence is unchangeable as long as the state exists. No change from the inside is possible, because in Israel there is no essential difference between Right and Left. Both are accomplices in a policy whose real aim is ethnic cleansing, the expulsion of the Palestinians not only from the occupied territories, but also from Israel proper.
Therefore, everyone who strives for a just solution must aim at the establishment of a single state, to which the refugees of 1948 and 1967 will be invited to return. This will be a joint and egalitarian state, like today's South Africa.
There is no sense in trying to change Israel from the inside. Salvation will come from the outside: a world-wide boycott of Israel, which will cause the state to collapse and convince the Israeli public that there is no escape from the One-State Solution.
It sounded logical and convincing, and the speaker did indeed gain applause.
This theoretical structure contains several assumptions with which I have no quarrel. The Zionist Left has indeed collapsed in the last few years, and its absence from the field of struggle is a painful and dangerous fact. In today's Knesset, there is no effective Zionist party that is seriously fighting for real equality for the Arab citizens. Nobody is able today to call out into the street hundreds of thousands, or even tens of thousands, in order to pressure the government to accept the peace proposal of the whole Arab world.
There is no doubt that the real disease is not the 40-year long occupation. The occupation is a symptom of a more profound disease, which is connected with the official ideology of the state. The aim of ethnic cleansing and the establishment of a Jewish State from the sea to the river is dear to the hearts of many Israelis, and perhaps Rabbi Meir Kahane was right when he asserted that this is everybody's unspoken desire.
But unlike Professor Pappe, I am convinced that it is possible to change the historical direction of Israel. I am convinced that this is the real battlefield for the Israeli peace forces, and I myself have been engaged in it for decades.
Moreover, I believe that we have already attained impressive achievements: the recognition of the existence of the Palestinian people has become general, and so has the readiness of most Israelis to accept the idea of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as the capital of both states. We have compelled our government to recognize the PLO, and we shall compel them to recognize Hamas. True, all this would not have happened without the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and (sometimes) favourable international circumstances, but the contribution of the Israeli peace forces, which pioneered these ideas, was significant.
Also, the notion has lately gained acceptance in Israel and other countries, that peace will be achieved only if we succeed in overcoming the gap between the Israeli and the Palestinian narratives and in integrating them into one single historical account, which will recognize the injustices which have been committed and which are still going on. Nothing is more important. (Our path-breaking booklet "Truth Against Truth" was the beginning of this process.)
On the surface, it appears that we have failed. We have not succeeded in compelling our government to stop the building of the wall or the enlargement of the settlements, nor to restore to the Palestinians their freedom of movement. In short, we have not succeeded in putting an end to the occupation. The Arab citizens of Israel have not attained real equality. But beneath the surface, in the depths of national consciousness, we are succeeding. The question is how to turn the hidden success into an open political fact. In other words: how to change the policy of the Israeli government.
The idea of the "One-State Solution" will harm this effort very much.
It diverts the effort from a solution that has now, after many years, a broad public basis, in favour of a solution that has no chance at all.
There is no doubt that 99.99% of Jewish Israelis want the State of Israel to exist as a state with a robust Jewish majority, whatever its borders.
The belief that a world-wide boycott could change this is a complete illusion.
Immediately after his lecture, my colleague Adam Keller asked the professor a

simple question: "The entire world has imposed a blockade on the Palestinian people. But in spite of the terrible misery of the Palestinians, they have not been brought to their knees. Why do you think that a boycott would break the Israeli public, which is far stronger economically, so that they would give up the Jewish character of the state?" (There was no answer.)
In any case, such a boycott is quite impossible. Here and there, an organization can declare a boycott, small circles of justice-lovers can keep it, but there is no chance that in the coming decades a world-wide boycott movement, like the one that broke the racist regime in South Africa, will come about. That regime was headed by declared admirers of the Nazis. A boycott of the "Jewish State", which is identified with the victims of the Nazis, just will not happen. It will be enough to remind people that the long road to the gas chambers started with the 1933 Nazi slogan "Kauft nicht bei Juden" ("Don't buy from Jews").
(The obnoxious fact that the government of the "State of the Holocaust Survivors" had close relations with the Apartheid State does not change this situation.)
That is the problem with the bed of Sodom: one size does not fit all. When the circumstances are different, the remedies must be different, too.
THE IDEA of the "One-State Solution" can attract people who despair of the struggle for the soul of Israel. I do understand them. But it is a dangerous idea, especially for the Palestinians.
Statistically, the Israeli Jews constitute, as of now, the absolute majority between the sea and the river. To that, one must add an even more important fact: the average annual income of an Arab Palestinian is about 800 dollars, that of a Jewish Israeli is about 20,000 dollars – 25 times (!) higher. The Israeli economy is growing every year. The Palestinians would be "hewers of wood and drawers of water". That means that if the imaginary joint state did indeed come into being, the Jews there would wield in it absolute power. They would, of course, use this power to consolidate their dominance and prevent the return of refugees.
Thus the South African example could come true retroactively: in the Single State, an apartheid-like regime would indeed come into being. Not only would the Israeli-Palestinian conflict not be solved, but on the contrary, it would move into an even more dangerous phase.
Pappe put forward an argument that looked a bit strange to me: that a Single State already exists in practice, since Israel rules from the sea to the river. But that is not so. There is no single state, neither formally nor in practice, but one state occupying another. Such a state, in which a dominant nation controls the others, will eventually disintegrate – as did the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.
The One State will not come into being. Not only the Israelis, but most of the Palestinians, too, will not give up their right to a national state of their own. They can applaud an Israeli professor who advocates the dismantling of the State of Israel, but they have no time to wait for utopian solutions that could be realized in a hundred years. They need an end to the occupation and to achieve a solution to the conflict here and now, in the near future.
All who wholeheartedly want to help the occupied Palestinian people would be well advised to keep well away from the idea of a general boycott of Israel. It would push all Israelis into the arms of the extreme Right, because it would reinforce the right-wing belief that "All the world is against us" – a belief that took root in the years of the Holocaust, when "all the world looked on and kept silent". Every Israeli child learns this in school.
A focused boycott against specific organizations and corporations that actively contribute to the occupation can indeed help in convincing the Israeli public that the occupation is not worthwhile. Such a boycott can achieve a specific aim – if it is not aimed at the collapse of the State of Israel. Gush Shalom, to which I belong, has for 10 years been organizing a boycott of the products of the settlements. The aim is to isolate the settlers and their accomplices. But a general boycott on the State of Israel would achieve the very opposite – to isolate the Israeli peace activists.
The “two-state solution" was and still is the only solution. When we put it forward immediately after the 1948 war, we could be counted on the fingers of two hands not only in Israel but in the entire world. Now there exists a world-wide consensus about it. The path to this solution is not smooth, many dangers lurk on the way, but it is a realistic solution that can be achieved.

One can say: Okay, we will accept the two-state solution because it is realistic, but after its realization we shall endeavour to abolish the two states and establish one joint state. That is alright with me. As for myself, I hope that in the course of time a federation of the two states will come into being, and relations between the two will become close. I also hope that a regional union, like the EU, will be established, consisting of all the Arab states and Israel, and perhaps also Turkey and Iran.
But first of all we must treat the wound from which we are all suffering: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Not by patent medicines, certainly not by a bed of Sodom, but with the medicines that are on the shelf.
The 18th chapter of Genesis tells of Abraham trying to convince the Almighty not to obliterate Sodom. "Per adventure there be fifty righteous within the city; wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?"
God promised him not to destroy the town if there were 50 righteous in it. Abraham haggled and brought the Almighty down to 45, then 40, 30 and 20, finally settling for 10. But in Sodom there were no 10 righteous to be found, and so its fate was sealed.
I believe that in Israel there are many, many more than ten righteous people. All public opinion polls show that the great majority of Israelis not only want peace, but are ready to pay its price. But they are afraid. They lack trust. They are shackled by the beliefs they acquired in early childhood. They must be freed from them – and I believe that it can be done.

[52] Yossi Beilin: Don't give them arms, in „Ynet" 17.04.2007:
Prime Minister Ehud Olmert wishes to boost Palestinian President Abbas. President George W. Bush also wishes to strengthen him. The approach chosen to achieve this objective is to send weapons to forces affiliated with Abbas so that they can fight against forces loyal to Hamas, Fatah's partner in the Palestinian national unity government.
On the other hand, Olmert maintains his decisive objection to dialogue on a final-status agreement.
What we see here are three grave mistakes: First, the last thing we need to add to the Palestinian Authority is more weapons.
When the PA was established, it had to be allowed to acquire arms, because without enforcing law and order there would have been no significance to the creation of such Authority.
Today, arming one element in the PA due to the intention to see Fatah twist Hamas' arm soon could end up as a terrible boomerang. The historical experience of such "boosts" is horrifying. Moreover, in this case it would constitute an incentive for Hamas to arm itself even more, and if clashes between the two sides break out it would not be much of a gamble to assume Hamas would emerge victorious.
Don't count on Arab Initiative
Secondly, Abbas can only be strengthened through one tool – namely, negotiations on a final-status agreement. Hamas is unwilling to engage in dialogue with Israel and prefers that the PLO, headed by Abbas, do that. The latter has espoused for many years the advancement of a final-status agreement and has shown strong reservations when it comes to intermediate agreements.
If Abbas succeeds in this move and is able to submit a draft agreement with Israel to a Palestinian referendum he would be stronger than all his opponents. If all he can bring to his people is regular bi-weekly meetings with Olmert to discuss the Karni Crossing's hours of operation, Abbas would lose even more authority and pay a heavy political price.
Thirdly, Olmert declares that he is willing to engage in dialogue with the Arab League regarding a diplomatic solution between Israel and the Palestinians, but there is no chance for such negotiations to take place. The Arab Initiative's bottom line is that if Israel makes peace with the Palestinians and Syrians, Arab states would maintain normal ties with it. The Arab world would not be objecting to one clause or another in bilateral agreements, should such agreements be signed, and as a result the principles appearing in the Arab Initiative are very general and do not constitute a substitute for negotiations.
By the way, should the Arab League decide to put itself in the Palestinians' shoes and engage in dialogue in their place, we can assume that its positions would be much less compromising than the Palestinian positions.

Israelis, Palestinians pay price
I fail to grasp the logic that guides the prime minister. Only the plethora of investigations launched against him may serve to explain why he chooses to fire in all directions instead of maintaining a consistent policy aimed at reaching an objective he believes in himself, based on his speeches: Namely, ending the occupation, which has been lasting for 40 years now, through negotiations, or via a unilateral move should talks fail.
It is sad to see how figures such as Sharon and Olmert, who reached positions of influence while holding on to a very hawking worldview, ended up advocating positions that doves would not even imagine proposing – ranging from withdrawal without getting anything in exchange to handing over weapons to one Palestinian group, as pragmatic as it may be, in order for it to undermine another group.
Those who pay the price of these mistakes are Israelis and Palestinians, who see peace moving further away, and meanwhile are forced to live with lack of security and concern over the next war, which is facing them from newspaper headlines.

[53] Vgl. die Eintragungen am 16.01., 29.01., 06.02. und am 09.03.2007 in dieser Chronologie.

[54] Dokumentation des „Temporary International Mechanism for the Assistance of the Palestinian People", Bezug nehmend auf die Erklärung des Nahost-Quartetts vom 09.05.2006, in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente" dieser Homepage.

[55] Azmi Bishara: Why Israel is after me, in „Los Angeles Times" 03.05.2007:
Amman, Jordan – I am a Palestinian from Nazareth, a citizen of Israel and was, until last month, a member of the Israeli parliament.
But now, in an ironic twist reminiscent of France's Dreyfus affair — in which a French Jew was accused of disloyalty to the state — the government of Israel is accusing me of aiding the enemy during Israel's failed war against Lebanon in July. Israeli police apparently suspect me of passing information to a foreign agent and of receiving money in return. Under Israeli law, anyone – a journalist or a personal friend – can be defined as a "foreign agent" by the Israeli security apparatus. Such charges can lead to life imprisonment or even the death penalty.
The allegations are ridiculous. Needless to say, Hezbollah – Israel's enemy in Lebanon – has independently gathered more security information about Israel than any Arab Knesset member could possibly provide. What's more, unlike those in Israel's parliament who have been involved in acts of violence, I have never used violence or participated in wars. My instruments of persuasion, in contrast, are simply words in books, articles and speeches.
These trumped-up charges, which I firmly reject and deny, are only the latest in a series of attempts to silence me and others involved in the struggle of the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel to live in a state of all its citizens, not one that grants rights and privileges to Jews that it denies to non-Jews.
When Israel was established in 1948, more than 700,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled in fear. My family was among the minority that escaped that fate, remaining instead on the land where we had long lived. The Israeli state, established exclusively for Jews, embarked immediately on transforming us into foreigners in our own country.
For the first 18 years of Israeli statehood, we, as Israeli citizens, lived under military rule with pass laws that controlled our every movement. We watched Jewish Israeli towns spring up over destroyed Palestinian villages.
Today we make up 20% of Israel's population. We do not drink at separate water fountains or sit at the back of the bus. We vote and can serve in the parliament. But we face legal, institutional and informal discrimination in all spheres of life.
More than 20 Israeli laws explicitly privilege Jews over non-Jews. The Law of Return, for example, grants automatic citizenship to Jews from anywhere in the world. Yet Palestinian refugees are denied the right to return to the country they were forced to leave in 1948. The Basic Law of Human Dignity and Liberty – Israel's "Bill of Rights" – defines the state as "Jewish" rather than a state for all its citizens. Thus Israel is more for Jews living in Los Angeles or Paris than it is for native Palestinians.

Israel acknowledges itself to be a state of one particular religious group. Anyone committed to democracy will readily admit that equal citizenship cannot exist under such conditions.
Most of our children attend schools that are separate but unequal. According to recent polls, two-thirds of Israeli Jews would refuse to live next to an Arab and nearly half would not allow a Palestinian into their home.
I have certainly ruffled feathers in Israel. In addition to speaking out on the subjects above, I have also asserted the right of the Lebanese people, and of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, to resist Israel's illegal military occupation. I do not see those who fight for freedom as my enemies.
This may discomfort Jewish Israelis, but they cannot deny us our history and identity any more than we can negate the ties that bind them to world Jewry. After all, it is not we, but Israeli Jews who immigrated to this land. Immigrants might be asked to give up their former identity in exchange for equal citizenship, but we are not immigrants.
During my years in the Knesset, the attorney general indicted me for voicing my political opinions (the charges were dropped), lobbied to have my parliamentary immunity revoked and sought unsuccessfully to disqualify my political party from participating in elections – all because I believe Israel should be a state for all its citizens and because I have spoken out against Israeli military occupation. Last year, Cabinet member Avigdor Lieberman – an immigrant from Moldova – declared that Palestinian citizens of Israel "have no place here," that we should "take our bundles and get lost." After I met with a leader of the Palestinian Authority from Hamas, Lieberman called for my execution.
The Israeli authorities are trying to intimidate not just me but all Palestinian citizens of Israel. But we will not be intimidated. We will not bow to permanent servitude in the land of our ancestors or to being severed from our natural connections to the Arab world. Our community leaders joined together recently to issue a blueprint for a state free of ethnic and religious discrimination in all spheres. If we turn back from our path to freedom now, we will consign future generations to the discrimination we have faced for six decades.
Americans know from their own history of institutional discrimination the tactics that have been used against civil rights leaders. These include telephone bugging, police surveillance, political delegitimization and criminalization of dissent through false accusations. Israel is continuing to use these tactics at a time when the world no longer tolerates such practices as compatible with democracy.
Why then does the U.S. government continue to fully support a country whose very identity and institutions are based on ethnic and religious discrimination that victimize its own citizens?

[56] Vgl. Reiner Bernstein: Von Gaza nach Genf. Schwalbach/Ts. 2006, S. 32 f.

[57] Bernard Avishai: Driverless, in „Harper's Magazine" 01.04.2007:
In late November, I visited the campus of Al-Quds University in Abu Dis, an eastern suburb of Jerusalem, to attend an international conference on Palestinian refugees. Numbers are hard to validate, but it is widely accepted that 5 million survivors and descendants of the 750,000 Arabs who fled (or were chased out) of Israel during the 1948 war, as well as the 500,000 who were displaced in 1967, remain refugees. Of those living outside the Palestinian Authority, about two thirds of registered refugees are in Jordan, where most qualify for citizenship, and 30 percent are evenly divided between Syria and Lebanon, where they generally do not.
Palestinians will tell you that the right of return to their homes is sacred. As many as 40 percent of the refugee families still live in squalid camps, in leaking houses of cracked concrete and tin roofs. According to American University of Beirut sociologist Sari Hanafi, only a small percentage of camp dwellers marry people from the outside; the camps, he argues, are like bones misplaced in muscle, with no "connective tissue" to the urban centers where real life happens.
Israelis will tell you the refugee camps are just breeding grounds for Palestinian revanchist fantasies and should have been integrated into "the Arab states" two generations ago, the way Israel incorporated 600,000 Jewish refugees from neighboring countries. The Palestinian claim of a right to "their homes" is intolerable, even for veteran Israeli peace activists like the writer Amos Oz. Jews

have resisted being thrown into the sea, so should they now choose to be swamped? Does not the refugees' right of return contradict Israel's right to exist? The problem would seem intractable.
The drive to Al-Quds University should take no more than fifteen minutes from my apartment in the German Colony. It is on the next scatter of hills south of the Augusta Victoria Hospital, where Arab residents of this part of Jerusalem typically go for medical treatment. But it took almost fifty-five minutes in light traffic, since Abu Dis is now formally assigned to the territory of the Palestinian Authority and is just behind the "security fence" that snakes through Jerusalem and the West Bank. To get to Abu Dis—to find a checkpoint through the fence—we had to drive around the burgeoning Jewish suburb of Ma'ale Adumim several miles to the north. Imagine going from Wall Street to NYU via the Upper West Side. Imagine making the trip to the hospital from Abu Dis when the traffic is heavy, your identity card says you are no longer a resident of Jerusalem, the checkpoint guard got up on the wrong side of the bed, and your wife is in labor. It gives a whole new meaning to the phrase "right of return."
I finally got to the conference building—as it happens, a stone's throw from the wall and its defiant graffiti. The two featured speakers of the morning were Saeb Erekat, the intense, perennial Palestinian "chief negotiator," still close to (and bringing greetings from) PA President Mahmoud Abbas, and Nabil Sha'ath, perhaps the most affable diplomat of the old brain trust around Yasir Arafat. Sha'ath had managed the Palestinian negotiating team on refugees at the peace summit at Taba, the Egyptian resort town on the Red Sea, in January 2001. That summit, undertaken while the Al-Aqsa intifada burned in the background, was the last time Israelis and Palestinians formally tried to come to a "final status" agreement within the framework of the 1993 Oslo Accords. At the time, Bill Clinton had just surrendered the presidency, but his bridging parameters, negotiated in Washington in December 2000 and meant to close the gap that had emerged between Ehud Barak and Arafat at the failed Camp David talks six months before, served as the agenda. Israeli negotiators had reported progress, but the summit was rushed because of an impending Israeli election, in which Ehud Barak was widely expected to take a beating from Ariel Sharon.
Erekat spoke passionately. Using Arafat's marquee phrase, he called for the "peace of the brave," the release of prisoners on both sides: "a comprehensive calm—no Palestinian missiles, no Israeli shells." He did not consider the refugees but rebuked "forces that sow division"—namely Hamas, which had accused Abbas's Fatah party of having forgotten the refugees. He acknowledged that Hamas had been democratically elected but warned the party not to bypass the PLO, the national umbrella, which Fatah still controlls. After almost a year of Hamas trying to consolidate power in the PA— prompting international financial sanctions, political isolation, and so on—the PA was now stuck with tens of thousands of unpaid teachers, police, and other civil servants. Fatah was rising steadily in the polls and now seemed assured a majority in any new election. The air was buzzing with talk of a "unity" government, led by Fatah's own Abbas, and of the urgency of his meeting with Hamas's Khaled Meshal to avoid civil war. (They finally reached agreement on a unity government in Mecca on February 8, but it is not yet clear whether its terms, including a cautiously worded call to "respect" the PLO's previous agreements with Israel, will end Western sanctions.)
Whatever Sha'ath's real mission at the conference, he seemed to give encouragement to new negotiations by claiming that the past negotiations at Taba had almost succeeded and implying that Hamas was only making a bad situation worse. He did not disappoint.
The refugee negotiations at Camp David got nowhere, Sha'ath said, because the Israelis had been stalling. But at Taba, he said, refugees were not shunted aside, and their troubles would have been resolved according to a number of "modalities." He roared them out in bullet form: There would be financial compensation for lost property. There would be paid relocation to the Palestinian state. There would be contributions by donor countries, and even by Israel, to that state. (One economist present cheerfully put the amount of reparations at $137 billion.) There would even be a program of limited family reunification in Israel, up to a number "acceptable to the Israeli government," say 10,000 a year over five years. Nobody could say justice of a kind was not being exacted.

When Sha'ath finished, however, the applause was merely polite. It was as if everybody had heard it all before. And, of course, we had. For these "modalities" were entirely familiar, basically identical to the principles that had been incorporated into the Geneva Initiative, a document signed by a team of Israeli and Palestinian politicians, writers (including Oz), and others, in October 2003. Geneva's organizers, Yossi Beilin, the former Israeli justice minister, and former PA Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo, had both been at Taba and wanted to complete its work. Their document amounted to a comprehensive peace deal: There would be a Palestinian state established in the West Bank and Gaza, joined by a bridge or tunnel, and using the 1967 borders as the starting point. Land swaps (e.g., from the Negev to Gaza) would allow densely populated Jewish settlements around Jerusalem and Hebron, some 150,000 people, to be annexed to Israel, but Israel would evacuate Jewish settlements on the hills around major Palestinian cities. (Of all major urban settlements, only Ariel in the north and Qiryat Arba in the south would be evacuated, since access to them required long fingers of land to jut into Palestine, making a contiguous state impossible.) Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem, including those in the Old City, would be absorbed into the Palestinian state, with the Haram al- Sharif and its mosques coming under Palestinian sovereignty. The Jewish Quarter and the Wailing Wall would stay under Israeli sovereignty. International forces, mainly under U.N. auspices, would help police the Old City and the shared border. Israel would maintain a three-year security presence in the Jordan Valley, and security cooperation under U.S. mediation would continue beyond that date.

That was the deal—that's still the deal—and Sha'ath could only restate it. The refugee problem, which was supposed to prompt new study and declarations of steadfastness, was actually resolved four years ago. The border was resolved. Jerusalem was resolved. The placement of international forces was resolved. As King Abdullah of Jordan put it recently, "You have the road map, you have Taba, you have the Geneva Accord. So, we don't have to go back to the drawing board." According to a December poll, more than half of Israelis and about half of Palestinians already accept the terms of this agreement. And Abdullah might have added that we also have the Saudi plan, adopted by the Arab League summit in March 2002, declaring that all regional states will simultaneously recognize Israel in return for the 1967 border Geneva calls for. I put the matter point-blank to Sha'ath. Had the Palestinian Authority formally accepted the terms of the Geneva Initiative? "Well, that depends who we're talking to," he told me. "If I were talking to current Israeli negotiators and I said I accepted Geneva, they would say, 'Great, let's start from there and negotiate a compromise.' If I were talking to Beilin, the attitude would be different. It would be a short negotiation."

This raises a vexing question: If the framework for a full peace has been negotiated, why are we still killing each other? The short answer is the vendetta logic of violence itself: the Oslo process was supposed to yield, first, a period of confidence building, and second, final status talks to produce an agreement. What has actually taken place since 2000 is, first, a final status agreement, and second, the catastrophic erosion of any confidence to implement it: pro settler provocations, suicide bombings, assassinations, missiles, shells, hollow ultimatums—and then Lebanon.

But there is a long answer, which is that nothing stands in the way of an agreement, except for a reciprocal reluctance of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Abbas, both openly committed to a twostate peace like Geneva advanced, to act boldly in the face of righteous domestic opposition. Fatah's wariness of Hamas—its shows of force and erratic exploitation of international pressure to gain the upper hand—is only one side of the equation. Olmert, too, has an opposition: several hundred thousand settlers in the West Bank and around Jerusalem, ultraorthodox parties, Russian immigrant hawks, combat officers nervous about losing "deterrent power." He is understandably reluctant to take them on for the sake of a peace process that could at any time be subverted by either the Palestinians' weakness or their "unity."

In any case, given Olmert's impulsive performance during the Lebanon war, his political survival is hardly assured. His approval ratings hover somewhere around 15 percent. For most of his career, Olmert has professed an attachment to Greater Israel, and everybody knows that he favored pulling out of Gaza mainly because he

thought this would make it easier to unilaterally annex large parts of East Jerusalem and the West Bank.
Nevertheless, the government Olmert (or his successor) will lead until 2010 is not resisting a deal like Geneva for ideological reasons. This may be the most pragmatic government Israel has ever had, for the elites that organized this government have made a huge bet on Israel's economic globalization. They are counting on levels of growth like that of the Asian Tigers to mitigate ugly inequalities— repair a dysfunctional educational system and integrate Israel's own increasingly restive Arab minority, who make up one fifth of the country. The economy is booming at the moment, but its growth is led by hundreds of software companies, components companies, and so forth, which need to have open markets in Europe and Asia, where about half of Israel's foreign exports go. Another war or the revival of the intifada— leading to a shunning of Israelis— will send the economy south and the elite's children west.
The great challenge is to get each side—Israel and Palestine—to trust in something without having to trust the other. What the Israeli prime minister needs is a dose of what the Palestinian president has been getting: great powers forcing the issue, bringing the sides to an endgame that leaders and majorities will accept and do not have the courage to "sow division" over. Paradoxically, the last thing Israel needs is exactly what Olmert has been asking for—the gradualism of the Road Map without pressure, a free hand to deal with "terror," more confidence-building measures. The only thing that will build confidence today is a clear commitment of Americans and Europeans to a definite plan like Geneva. In the absence of such a plan, Olmert and Abbas become hostages to every Islamist terrorist or hard-line Israeli officer who makes the decision to pursue "militants." Olmert must be able to say what Abbas has been compelled to say to those who oppose him: "You are alienating the world. We have to choose between our old dreams and American support. Our economy cannot survive isolation."
It need hardly be said that the Bush Administration, friends to the end, do not subscribe to this view. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has spoken vaguely of bilateral negotiations moving to a "political horizon." She is reportedly looking again at Geneva. But how to get from talk about process to talk about a deal? Rice, like her boss, seems to believe mostly in evil people being beaten into joining, or in an ownership diplomacy in which the U.S. speaks best by speaking least. As I write, she has left Jerusalem after an inclusive Olmert-Abbas summit. "The real value here was that they sat down to talk with each other," Rice said. In January, however, newspapers reported that informal (and, by all accounts, productive) negotiations between Israelis and Syrians had been curtailed due to administration disapproval. States that abet terror must stand in the corner.
But as we approach the U.S. primary season, the world-famous fatuousness of the Bush Administration is not the only danger. What "electable" Democratic presidential candidate in 2004 even raised the question of West Bank settlements? American Jews are more dependable contributors to the Democratic Party than almost any other "demographic," and elections are still fought largely by brand managers. What consultant will allow a candidate to prejudge the outcome of Israel's negotiations or limit Israel's freedom of action? Will Barack Obama risk stories about Jews in New York or Los Angeles questioning his friendliness to Israel? Will Hillary Clinton risk endorsing "bridging parameters" that carry her own name? Think of the reaction to Jimmy Carter's recent book.
Clinton's statements on the matter are especially unsatisfying, given how far her husband took the negotiation process in 2000. If she endorsed his proposals, which yielded the Geneva Initiative, she'd liberate the Democratic field to do the same. Instead, she told the Council on Foreign Relations in October 2006 that there is "no reliable partner on the Palestinian side," that progress depends on Hamas recognizing Israel, which America must remain in "close coordination with"—in all, a policy as cunningly opaque as the circles around Richard Perle's eyes. The point is, the Road Map leads, if anywhere, to Geneva. With no American driver, the wars continue. Do we need new refugees to tell us where that leads?

[58] Text der TIM in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente" dieser Homepage.

[59] Salam Fayyad: Palestinian hope held hostage, in „Los Angeles Times" 31.03.2007:

Two weeks ago, I became the minister of finance for a people whose economy has all but collapsed. It was the start of business for the new Palestinian unity government, born after months of tricky on-again, off-again negotiations and amid economic sanctions, bloodshed and misery.

The government came together after a bad year for the struggling Palestinian Authority. Our economic difficulties grew much worse during that period, in the aftermath of a free and fair election that brought Hamas to power. Because Hamas' political platform did not conform to key elements of the peace process, including Palestinian recognition of Israel's right to exist and a commitment to renounce violence, the international community imposed sanctions on the Palestinian Authority.

Although much of the discussion leading to the formation of the unity government has focused on these two commitments, their validity should not have been much in question. After all, these commitments were made by the Palestine Liberation Organization, the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, in a crystal-clear and binding agreement in 1993, and no Palestinian government has the authority to revoke them. In fact, the unity government's platform explicitly states that it will honor all PLO agreements, which, to be sure, include these two commitments.

As someone who has long worked for peace and reconciliation with Israel – a peace based on mutual recognition of each people's rights – I have always subscribed to the PLO's political program and all the commitments it embodies, including the recognition of Israel's right to exist and the renunciation of violence. I still do. My top priority is to lead the effort to end the economic sanctions and to restore the integrity of our public finance system.

A harsh and painful year after the onset of the sanctions, staggering poverty and unemployment rates prevail. Today, almost two-thirds of the Palestinian population lives in poverty, with per-capita income at 60% of its level in 1999. But as Thomas Jefferson said: "If we are to dream, the flatteries of hope are as cheap, and pleasanter, than the gloom of despair." As a Palestinian, I have a duty to hope and to work tirelessly to make the dreams of my people a reality.

We Palestinians dream of living normal lives. We dream of an end to the days when Palestinian farmers in the West Bank watch their crops destroyed to make way for Israeli-only roads, an end to the days when Palestinian children must brave Israeli military checkpoints to get to school and an end to the days when Gaza's 1.4 million Palestinians are sealed inside their territory, cut off from the rest of the world. Like all people, we deserve freedom in our own land. We deserve democratic, transparent and accountable institutions. And we deserve to live in peace and economic cooperation with all our neighbors, including Israel.

Over the years, the international community has encouraged and supported Palestinians in building democratic institutions to serve as the foundation of our future state. Donor assistance helped pay for the building of schools, hospitals and roads in addition to supporting good governance and providing the know-how to create a functioning administration.

In my previous term as finance minister, from June 2002 to December 2005, I played a leading role in establishing transparency and accountability in government finances through the introduction of a series of deep, wide-ranging reforms that helped bring our public finance system up to international standards. These included the consolidation of all government revenues in the Ministry of Finance, the elimination of extra-budgetary spending and the regular publication of detailed financial statements.

Since the international sanctions were imposed, aid has continued to flow, which has helped prevent starvation. But by channeling funds so that they bypass the Ministry of Finance, donors have unintentionally contributed to reversing these institution-building gains. The money coming in can no longer be traced, and we cannot ensure that it is not being misappropriated.

Also, our dependence on foreign-aid handouts is increasing while our economic development is stifled. In 2005, for example, only 16% of European Union aid to Palestine was classified as humanitarian. Last year, that figure rose to 56%.

We do not aspire to be a beggar nation, dependent on the world to feed our people. We have the capacity, education and talent to build a thriving economy and a strong democracy. But we cannot do so while Israel seals our borders and withholds tax revenue it owes us, or while U.S. banking regulations prevent banks from handling government business.
In order that we may begin again to develop the institutions and systems that will make us self-reliant and that will buttress the foundation of our future state, the sanctions must be lifted.
The U.S. has long acknowledged – as has the entire world community – that the formation of a viable, independent Palestinian state on the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip is the way out of this nearly 60-year-old conflict. But until the international community demonstrates the political will to help bring about a comprehensive settlement – one that will grant Palestinians the freedom to build our own economy and institutions in our own land – we will all continue to pay the price. Despair will continue to erode hope. And, lest we forget the words of Jefferson, hope is indeed "as cheap, and pleasanter."

[60] Vgl. Reiner Bernstein: Von Gaza nach Genf. Die Genfer Friedensinitiative von Israelis und Palästinensern. Schwalbach/Ts. 2006, S. 30 f.

[61] Text der Erklärung von Riyadh in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente" dieser Homepage.

[62] Israeli statement on the Arab Summit in Riyadh, 29 March, 2007:
Israel believes in peace, and seeks to establish peaceful and neighborly relations both with the Palestinian people and with all the states of the region.
Israel is sincerely interested in pursuing a dialogue with those Arab states that desire peace with Israel, this in order to promote a process of normalization and cooperation. Israel hopes that the Riyadh Summit will contribute to this effort.
Israel's position with regard to the peace process with the Palestinians is founded upon fundamental principles, the most central of which is the existence of two nation-states, with each state addressing the national aspirations of its own people – Israel for the Jewish people and Palestine for the Palestinian people – and with both states coexisting in peace, free of the threat of terrorism and violence. For this purpose, a direct dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians is necessary.
Israel also believes that moderate Arab states can fill a positive role by encouraging regional cooperation, and supporting the Israel-Palestinian track. A dialogue between these states and Israel can contribute to this end.

[63] Yossi Beilin: Wanted: a sane coalition, in „bitterlemons" 26.03.2007:
The Riyadh Arab summit presents an important opportunity for Arab countries: to strengthen a pragmatic coalition capable of confronting extremism in the Arab world, recommitting to the Arab peace initiative and advancing regional peace processes.
The new Quartet, comprising Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, is now recognized and encouraged by the rest of the world; witness the meeting just held between US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and leaders of the four states.
The veteran Quartet made up of the UN, US, Russia and the EU functions on the basis of the lowest common denominator and generates more paralysis than new initiatives. In contrast, the new Quartet is likely to be more active, if only because it is acting on the basis of an egotistical but legitimate concern for the survival of its member regimes. Having concluded that in order to save themselves they must make a supreme effort to bring peace and stability to the Middle East, these leaders are likely to surprise us with their readiness to lead in directions where hitherto none had dared to venture.
I well remember a conversation with President Anwar Sadat that took place between the Camp David agreements of autumn 1978 and the Israeli-Egyptian peace pact signed in March 1979. I asked him which Arab state would be the second to make peace with Israel and he replied without hesitation, "Saudi Arabia". It was a bad mistake. The Saudis linked up with other Arab countries that resolutely opposed the agreement with Israel and lent a hand in boycotting Egypt, expelling it from the Arab League and moving the League's headquarters from Cairo to Tunis.

The Saudi initiative of March 2002 is the most far-reaching change in Saudi policy since those Camp David agreements. It constitutes a total reversal of the "three nos" of the September 1967 Khartoum Arab summit and reflects both the Saudi response to the events of 9/11 and the emergence of King Abdullah – even when he served as crown prince while his brother, the king, was effectively neutralized due to health problems. Now that Abdullah is king in his own right, he is initiating striking political moves like the Mecca summit, where he compelled Hamas and Fateh to form a national unity government. Anyone seeking to promote regional stability must recognize the positive nature of Abdullah's activities; we have been awaiting them ever since Sadat offered his assessment of the future Saudi role.
Undoubtedly, the situation we have found ourselves in since late 2000 is to a large extent the antithesis of the sense of diplomatic progress that characterized the 1990s. The failure of talks between Israel and Syria and Israel and the Palestinians, the outbreak of the second intifada, 9/11, the Iranian nuclear threat, the Hamas electoral victory –all these developments reversed our course, yet also generated a positive counter-reaction.
One of the more encouraging aspects of that counter-reaction has been the Arab League's response to the al-Qaeda phenomenon and the Iranian nuclear threat. Now, the establishment of a Palestinian unity government conveys a chance to create the unified Palestinian partner that we have long sought. Our attitude toward the new government must be determined by its performance rather than its composition or guidelines, problematic as they are.
If the new government succeeds in preventing any and all violence against Israel in accordance with a ceasefire in Gaza and the West Bank; if it brings about the release of Gilad Shalit; if it enables the PLO led by Mahmoud Abbas to manage diplomatic negotiations with Israel--then it will be fitting for the world to recognize it. At that point, it will also be possible to interpret the new government's guidelines in a more liberal manner, transfer aid funds to it and maintain normal contacts with it. Meanwhile, it would be a serious mistake to boycott those members of this government who for years have been committed to peace with Israel and who have made serious efforts to end terrorism and violence.
Recent events – the return to the Arab peace plan, the new Quartet, the Mecca summit, the establishment of a Palestinian unity government and the approaching Arab summit--all convey a new hope. That hope can be realized if we don't all repeat the mistakes of the past, and in particular if we don't perpetuate the mistake that for so many years has characterized all the regional and international actors: missing most of the opportunities.

[64] Dina Ezzat: The Riyadh factor, in „Al-Ahram Weekly“ 29.03.-04.04.2007:
It has become almost impossible not to find Saudi Arabia in any story reported on the Middle East for the regional or international press. Saudi Arabia has been increasing its volume, pace and depth of intervention in regional issues that it once dealt with only indirectly through regional or sub-regional forums like the Arab League or the three-way alliance that brought Riyadh, Damascus and Cairo together for the best part of the 1990s.
Today, things are taking a completely different shape: Saudi Arabia is intervening in the Palestinian issue, Lebanese developments, the situation in Sudan and the crisis in Somalia. Saudi Arabia is also talking to Iran about its relations with the West and the rest of the Arab world and is talking with Iraqi factions about the chances of reconciliation and ending internal Shia-Sunni fighting. The Saudis are making proposals to upgrade the quality of Arab regional regime and are criticising the failure of Arabs to take destiny into their own hands. And now, as the newly-crowned leader for the Arab summit, Saudi Arabia seems set to make 2007 the year of Saudi diplomacy in the Middle East.
"The regional order cannot continue the way it has been ... And we cannot blame the Arab League for the current situation since the league is only a reflection of our performance," Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah – otherwise known as the Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines – told Arab leaders during an inaugural speech before the Arab summit last week in Riyadh.
The message that Abdullah hinted at came as no surprise to any Arab leader or other delegate who convened at the heavily-secured and extravagantly decorated Palace of Conferences in Riyadh. Arab diplomats who listened to Abdullah's down-

to-earth and clearly confrontational – "transparent" as Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faissal qualified it – speech have been seeing a shift of dynamics across the Arab region for some while. "There is hardly a file that the Saudi are not involved in. They are talking to Palestinians about the future of their struggle for independence and they are listening from the Moroccans about their views on settling the Shara conflict. They are talking to the Iranians and Americans – maybe even mediating. They have involved themselves in every crucial regional issue," commented one Cairo-based Arab diplomat.

According to this and other Arab diplomats who attended the Riyadh summit, the picture was very clear. Saudi Arabia is now in the driving seat, even though it may not wish to get too much attention for it. "Look at who was talking to whom during the summit. Everybody was talking to the Saudis and this is not just because they chaired the Arab summit. This is because these delegations that approach the Saudis know very well that Saudi Arabia can deliver," commented one diplomat who requested anonymity. He added that this is not just the approach of Arab delegations but is equally the attitude of foreign leaders who have been showing greater interest in communicating their views to Riyadh.

"It is true that they will stop in Cairo or some other Arab capital but it is in Riyadh that they tend to think that business could be done," argued another Arab diplomat. Indeed, this week Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert singled the Saudi monarch from other Arab heads of state when he made statements asking for meetings with Arab leaders. After all, it was the Saudi King who proposed the Arab peace initiative that was adopted by the Arab summit in 2002. Today, King Abdullah has given his aides, especially chief of intelligence Bandar Bin Sultan, a green light to explore with all parties the chances of reviving this initiative and a clinically moribund Arab-Israeli peace process. "This is not just because the Americans have asked for help from Riyadh to move things forward," commented one Saudi source on condition of anonymity, "it is also because Saudi Arabia believes it in the interest of the stability of the region to see an end to the chronic Arab-Israeli struggle." According to this source, the Saudis were content for a while to provide moral and financial support to others to worry about the stability of the region but recently felt this stability increasingly challenged. "This king is different from previous kings. He is direct. He decided that he would interfere and he did," the source added.

One indicator of the growing role of Saudi diplomacy was the Mecca Accord struck, in February, that gave rise to a Palestinian national unity government. The Mecca deal alerted Americans to a Saudi diplomacy that appears slowly to be parting ways with the US agenda in the Middle East. But it is not only in the US and Israel that eyebrows are being lifted. In Egypt, too, there was a certain sense of shock among the intelligentsia that Saudi Arabia is now managing the situation in Egypt's immediate backyard "in the absence of Egyptian intervention".

From official Cairo, the reaction was contained, but some Egyptian officials expressed a sense of unease over the Mecca deal, especially in view of the fact that the Egyptian security delegation based in Gaza for close on two years was not invited to take part, even as an observer, in the Mecca talks, or at the signing ceremony. Some were, and are still, sceptical that the Mecca Accord will hold, arguing that without clear support from the Egyptian security delegation in Gaza, Hamas and Fatah fighters are bound to clash again.

But the score Saudi Arabia registered with the Mecca Accord was not a one-off. Only a few weeks before, Saudi Arabia – who had asked Egypt last year to host the 2007 Arab summit in its capacity as the seat of the Arab League – backtracked and asked to host the summit in Riyadh "in view of the complexity of the regional situation". A few weeks later, it was Saudi Arabia – now described by the Western press as the strongest Arab Sunni regime – who was intervening in the Lebanese crisis and trying to mend fences between the Sunni minority government and a Shia majority opposition.

Indeed, last December King Abdullah hosted an unprecedented meeting with representatives of the Shia Lebanese resistance group Hizbullah. Prior to this, Riyadh was closely monitoring the efforts of Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa in mediating a settlement in Lebanon. And last week in Riyadh, it was with the Saudi monarch that Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, who still carries considerable political weight in Lebanon, spent four hours attempting to mend fences, after having angered Arab leaders with statements indicating that some of

them were "half men". At the end of the meeting, informed sources say, Bashar promised Abdullah that he would use his influence over the pro- Syria camp in Lebanon to show flexibility to reach a settlement on power sharing in the country.
In the coming weeks, Saudi Arabia is also planning to host meetings on developments in Darfur, an issue discussed at length during a meeting hosted by the Saudi king on the fringe of the Riyadh summit with the presence of Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir and the chiefs of the UN, African Union and the Arab League. Saudi Arabia is also planning a meeting on Somalia. And as Saudi Foreign Minister Al-Faissal told the US weekly magazine *Newsweek*, Saudi Arabia is also trying to convince Tehran to meet the US half-way on a settlement of the Iranian nuclear standoff.
Speaking to the *Weekly*, American diplomats based in the Middle East said it is the belief in Washington that the role of Riyadh is likely to increase rather than to decrease as some Arab capitals may wish to see. "There is a certain kind of sensitivity in some Arab capitals, but it is a fact that the Saudis are now assuming a bigger regional role than ever before." This is not necessarily something that the Americans mind, especially that the US is now looking for a force, preferably Sunni, to balance against Tehran. Indeed, in support of the Saudi role, sources say, Washington has lowered the volume of its criticism of Saudi Arabia's human rights and women's rights record.
Meanwhile, there is a consensus among Arab and American officials that the real test for Saudi regional influence is the Iraq file. American diplomats say that while they would appreciate any Saudi diplomatic effort that could lead to a breakthrough on the Palestinian front, the Americans are soliciting Saudi influence on – or rather to get out of – Iraq. What the Americans have asked of Saudi Arabia, as the now-acknowledged Arab- Muslim lead state, is to contemplate ways to allow for Sunni-Shia reconciliation in Iraq to contain sectarian bloodshed there. The Saudis, American sources say, can do it, if anybody can. The rationale is simple: the Saudis have influence, moral and financial, over Sunni groups in Iraq if they have contacts with Iran that could influence Shia groups. If Saudi diplomacy passes the Iraq test it would indeed have earned the recognition of regional players as the new heart of regional leadership.

[65] Text des Interview-Berichts in der Menüleiste „Erklärungen, Interviews, Anzeigen“ dieser Homepage.

[66] Shimon Peres: By air, land and see, in “Haaretz” 26.03.2007:
About two weeks ago, the Israeli government made an important and precedent-setting decision to declare the Peace Valley project a "national project" with all the implications of such a decision: advancement in the government's list of priorities, a shortening of bureaucratic procedures and overall government enlistment to implement it. Such is the culmination of an effort to change viewpoints, to overcome prejudices and to operate by modern means to bring about a genuine diplomatic change in the region.
Every important event that has taken place since World War II was implemented by means of modern economics, which promotes the use of science and technology instead of simple adherence to territory. This major revolution, which changes long-standing practices, is taking place and continuing before our eyes. The world is changing, and its point of gravity is moving from diplomacy and strategy to science and technology, which are not limited to a specific area and are not controlled by governments.
In the face of the weakness of governments, the global non-governmental sector is becoming stronger. The transition from a territorial economy to an economy of science and technology does not change borders, but it does change relationships. The global companies create their own capital, and have adopted a culture of risk-taking and of exploiting new opportunities. Since they have no army or police force, they operate through the force of competition. Even countries that fear the penetration of foreign countries, or a foreign army, welcome investments by non-governmental companies, while the companies are seeking new opportunities.
The Middle East has relied greatly on strategy and diplomacy, and has not taken sufficient advantage of economics. Had we invested properly in the construction of a modern regional economy, we could have reduced poverty and formed practical

trusting relations with our neighbors. And so, although the Middle East is rich in possibilities and opportunities, possible changes have yet to take place here. The Peace Valley plan offers an initial and fascinating part of a vision to promote peace, regional stability in the Middle East and social advancement by means of economic cooperation, both regional and global.

Relations, not borders

The diplomatic track deals with borders, whereas the economic track deals with relations. It is easier to reach an agreement about relations than about borders. Good economic relations will at the end of the day make it easier to reach an agreement about borders. The Peace Valley plan is the first attempt to adopt the modern outlook: to use global levers, to take chances, to deal with the future, to develop new markets and to be open to new relationships. The project will be based on funding by extra-governmental factors that are interested in developing new markets and new technologies.

The Peace Valley plan covers the route of the African Rift, which stretches along 520 kilometers of the Israel-Jordan border, from the Red Sea in the South to the Yarmuk River in the North. Of them, 420 kilometers are shared with Jordan, with which we enjoy peaceful relations. Ten percent of the route passes along the future border with the Palestinians, who are in need of economic encouragement as well as financial assistance.

The Peace Valley vision is arousing a great deal of interest, and already now economic initiatives based on private investment and the support of institutions and countries are beginning to sprout. The economic initiatives will promote regional development, providing a wide array of advantages for countries in the region and their inhabitants.

The first projects will include the digging of the Peace Conduit, which will channel water from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea; joint development of agriculture and tourism; the construction of a joint Israeli-Jordanian airport; the creation of a rail link between Jordan and Israel; the construction of an industrial zone in Jenin and an agro-industrial region in the Jericho-Damya area with the assistance of the German and Japanese governments; and the construction and development of technological incubators.

The Dead Sea-Red Sea Canal. The Dead Sea is undergoing serious upheaval. It is losing its water and the sinkholes are threatening tourism in the region. This is too great a problem for one country, and therefore there is a need for cooperation between countries that share a sea, and global involvement interested in preventing ecological dangers and promoting peace.

Economic-business ventures will be set up along the Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal, including man-made lakes, energy-producing installations, modern agriculture, desalination facilities and hotels and tourist sites on both sides of the border.

Compensating for a loss of water

The canal project will turn the Arava into a blossoming garden and a center of attraction for tourists from all over the world. It will also compensate the Dead Sea for the loss of its water, and will create desalinated water for our Negev on the western side and for Jordanian agriculture on the eastern side. It will greatly strengthen Israeli-Jordanian relations and will help the Palestinians generate economic growth.

A joint airport. A joint airport for Israel and Jordan will foster future touristic cooperation between the two countries. It will have a Jordanian terminal for passengers traveling to Jordan and an Israeli terminal for passengers traveling to Eilat. Coordinated activity at a renovated airport will lead to streamlining and savings, more air traffic security and an improvement in service. The construction of the joint airport will make it possible to develop Eilat, freeing areas for construction in high-class areas of the city. It is preferable to invest in a developed city and an existing airport than to build another airport that will cost hundreds of millions of dollars – money that could be invested in city development.

A rail and transportation link. The plan takes into account a rail and transportation link between Jordan and Israel, which will shorten distances, reduce costs and develop new transportation from Europe and America to the Middle East. The Europeans are also proposing a future installation of two railroad lines that will link the Middle East and Europe. It is possible to add a northern line between Irbid in Jordan and Haifa in Israel, and a southern line in the direction of the Red Sea,

which will link Aqaba, the Red Sea and the Ashdod Port in one railway network. These lines are likely to create integration of the Middle East and Europe and to lead to economic momentum.
An industrial zone in Jenin. The West Bank is crying out for jobs. The financial assistance of the donor nations has not achieved its goal. The major unemployment and the poverty line in the areas of the Palestinian Authority demand serious attention by Israel, as well. In the area of northern Samaria there is potential for an industrial zone. The German government has agreed to allocate about $30 million to build such a zone, and other countries are willing to encourage their private firms to transfer branches to the area. The communities of the Jezreel Valley are also showing an interest. In the zone, industry dealing in textiles, wood and food products can be set up, with a network of logistical services to support this industry constructed on the Israeli side. Such an industrial zone can create thousands of jobs for the entire area. As happened in the industrial zone in Jordan.
Agricultural-industrial development in Jericho. The Jericho area can serve as an agricultural center for the entire Middle East. The Japanese government has decided to assist in the development of industrial agriculture in Jericho, to include a high-tech industrial agricultural park, along with an airport on the Jordanian side, which will be capable if delivering agricultural produce to the entire region. This project will enable the West Bank to send produce to markets all over the Middle East, and raise the standard of living in the West Bank.
The Peace Valley therefore opens the door to new opportunities. It is likely to be a bridge among three partners that are required both by nature and by peace to cooperate. It will take time, it will encounter difficulties, but every major initiative creates a major quarrel both with nature and human nature. The Peace Valley is an exceptional opportunity for a change in the atmosphere, for an improvement in relations, for a joint experience.
The Peace Valley is the beginning of economic hope, which will serve the diplomatic negotiations that will take place at the same time. Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians have already agreed to this project. The United States, the European countries and Japan have declared their support for it. This is the first economic agreement among the three partners, and the first that will be supported through global involvement. The Peace Valley project can promote the peace process, and it can get underway immediately.

[67] Der Text des Beiruter Friedensplans findet sich in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente" dieser Homepage.

[68] Remarks With Egyptian Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit, Secretary Condoleezza Rice, Joint Press Availability, Aswan, Egypt., March 25, 2007:
FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: (Via interpreter.) Good morning. Of course, Dr. Rice spent almost 24 hours in the city of Aswan and we expressed our deep welcome and appreciation to this historic city. The Secretary had a meeting with President Mubarak that lasted for almost 90 minutes. We have seen many positive elements during that meeting and we were able during the discussions to cover the situation in the region generally and specifically a number of regional issues, in particular the Palestinian issue.
Regarding the Palestinian issue, Dr. Rice shared the American approach and the American thinking and how to deal with both sides, the Palestinians and the Israeli sides, as well as the mission of the Quartet and the international community as well as (inaudible) the regional countries and how the regional countries can advance these steps forward.
Regarding Egypt, there is no doubt that we support the American efforts and we hope that the United States and Dr. Rice will succeed in achieving a breakthrough. And in this regard, there is also a fact that there is a Palestinian Government and a Palestinian Authority today on the ground that it is capable, and a Palestinian Authority from our point of view should be supported – this is Egypt's point of view – because supporting the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Government there's no doubt that will open the roads before and after peace process.
Also we have, as I said, discussed the regional issues and among on the top of the list the situation in Iraq, the issue of Darfur, the Lebanese issue as well as the nuclear Iranian issue. And we had brief discussions on the issue of nonproliferation

in the Middle East. This is regarding the meeting between President Mubarak and Dr. Rice.
Last night, also we had the group of the Arab foreign ministers and the head of intelligence from four Arab countries. It was two meetings and followed by a working dinner. We continued to discuss the same points. And I believe that the discussion was useful because it allowed each one the opportunity to be acquainted with the various points of views regarding how to move and push the peace process forward.
This is briefly what I wanted to share with you, and then there will be questions and answers that could shed more lights. Thank you.
SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for inviting me here and thank you very much for the hospitality here in Aswan. It's my first time in Aswan and it looks like an extraordinary place. And the next time I hope to have a chance to go out and see some of this extraordinary part of Egypt. I'm very pleased to be back in Egypt, where we are consulting with our friends about how to build a more prosperous and peaceful Middle East. It is obviously a challenging time here in the region, but President Bush has never been more committed to pushing forward an agenda for a new Middle East that will be more democratic and more secure and therefore more fully stable. We had an opportunity – I discussed with President Mubarak this morning the full range of regional issues. The Minister has noted everything from the Israeli-Palestinian issues, where I appreciate very much the support of Egypt as we go forward to try and achieve a vision of a two-state solution, two states living side by side in peace and in freedom. We talked also about Iraq and support for the young democracy in Iraq against extremist forces. As the Minister said, we talked about nuclear issues, including those concerning Iran; about the situation in Sudan and again the efforts of Egypt to help to bring stability to Sudan so that individuals there, innocent people there, can face a more stable future. And that was a very important part of our discussion. We also talked about the internal reform issues here in Egypt, and I appreciate the atmosphere of mutual respect in which we are able to do so.So all in all, it was a very good meeting today and I want to thank the Minister also for last night, when I had an opportunity to meet with some of our Arab colleagues to talk about how the Arab community, the Arab states, might join in support for a more peaceful Middle East, including in support of the Palestinian-Israeli track. And so thank you very much for hosting us here last night and today, and I look forward to returning to Egypt again, perhaps in another wonderful part of Egypt.
FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: I think the Secretary is coming back for the Quartet.
SECRETARY RICE: Yes, we will be back for the Quartet. We haven't set a date yet, but I look forward to that as well.
FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: Anytime.
SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.
FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: If we would sort of organize the press conference, would you accept two or three questions from each side?
SECRETARY RICE: (Off-mike.)
FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: Very nice.
QUESTION: This is a question from (inaudible) magazine for both ministers and especially the first question for you, Madame Secretary. Since the Bush Administration in June 2002 and until now all the American movements are still a process without substances, there is nothing concrete going on. We feel it's not built on anything. So in this visit do you have new ideas to help to start a real negotiation? And the second part, please, it's about why you don't tackle the Israeli nuclear power in the Middle East. Are there any efforts to convince Israel to go and join the NPT [Non-Proliferation Treaty]? Thank you.
SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Well, first of all, I would have to say that this has been a President that since he came into office has faced a very difficult situation in the Middle East. He came into office at the time that Camp David had failed and we were in the middle of the beginning of these second intifada. And he has worked patiently since then to try and lay a better foundation for peace, including being the first American President to make as a matter of policy the establishment of a Palestinian state. The two-state solution which we now talk about as if it were just always the case that everyone accepted a two-state solution is now – it is now the case that people accept the need for a two-state solution. That was not so in 2000.

There were large parts of the Israeli political spectrum that did not. There were elements of the Palestinian spectrum that did not. And so the President, I think, has helped to lay the foundation now on which we can build to try to finally bring about a Palestinian state, and he has made very clear that in his last year and a half in office, two years in office, that this will be one of our highest priorities. It is true that this is a difficult time between the parties, made more difficult by changing circumstances on the ground, including changing circumstances concerning the establishment of the Palestinian unity government. But as I said before, there's never an uncomplicated time in the Middle East and so I will work with the parties this time to try to establish a common approach toward resolving these longstanding differences. But I suppose if it had been easy to do, it would have been done before, and so we'll just have to work. In terms of nuclear-free zone, we've long said we hope that the day will come when there is no need for any state to contemplate the need for weapons of this kind in the Middle East.
FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: May I respond as well?
SECRETARY RICE: Yes.
FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: (Via interpreter) Regarding the question, we have heard the point of view from the U.S. Secretary of State and her intentions in how to move forward, and we believe that the upcoming phase will witness going into both the practical aspects and the substance in order to formulate the council and how to move towards the objective of two states. And we have full confidence in the Secretary's and her ability to work with the parties to achieve that goal. The goal is difficult, but I believe that plenty of determination and preparation and consistency would hopefully lead to results that will be positive. Regarding the issue of non-proliferation, we know that there is a resolution for a decision came out of the NPT in 1995 related to the Middle East and how to deal with the issue of non-proliferation in the Middle East. That decision was enhanced and all parties in the region were asked to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty through another decision in 2000. Now there is an upcoming meeting in 2010. This is the – there will be the seventh conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and we are working with the American side in order to reach an understanding that would lead to enhancing the idea of asking all parties and region to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty and we will continue our efforts in that regard.
QUESTION: A question for both of you, starting with Madame Secretary. Would you like to see a stepped-up, more public role for Saudi Arabia in Mideast peacemaking, perhaps including a face-to-face visit between the Saudis and the Israelis? And for both of you, do you think that Saudi Arabia has in any way usurped Egypt's former role as a central actor in Mideast peacemaking?
SECRETARY RICE: Look, there's plenty of work for everybody to do. And Egypt is a leader in the search for peace, a longtime leader in the search for peace, whose leaders took risks and have taken risks in order to promote peace. And that gives Egypt a central role that will always be a central role in the peace process. It is also the case that the King of Saudi Arabia, first in the Crown Prince initiative and then what became the Arab initiative, laid out a kind of vision of how there might be an Arab-Israeli reconciliation or a full reconciliation, and we think that that is a useful step as well. And we talked about how the Arab-Israeli side of this may indeed help to promote a comprehensive peace, might help to promote an Israeli-Palestinian end to the conflict and therefore the establishment of a Palestinian state, and I would hope that every state will search very deep to see what it can do at this crucial time to finally end this conflict. The Palestinian people have waited long enough to have a state of their own and the Israeli people have waited long enough to have the kind of security that will come from the establishment of a stable and democratic neighbor to live in peace with them. And so it is not the – it is our role, all of us, to do whatever we can in order to promote the two-state solution at this time.
QUESTION: (Off-mike.)
SECRETARY RICE: There may be many different ways to achieve this, but for now I think we just need to have every state look to see what it might be able to do to support the process.
FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: May I respond?
SECRETARY RICE: Yes, please. I think it was to you as well.

FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: (Via interpreter) The Middle East and the settlement in the Middle East should not be monopolized by one country. As Dr. Rice said, the U.S. Secretary of State, Egypt is a central country and Egypt carries out and discharges responsibilities over decades of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Today, there are more than Arab countries who would like to play a role in building peace. This is a collective responsibility. The Arab League is not Egypt. The Arab League is a collection of Arab countries that work together in order to achieve the objective of establishing peace in the region. Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia work hand in hand and very closely and with a great deal of coordination, and anyone who follows the Egyptian-Saudi work can easily detect many meetings. Many of them are open and public and many of them are unannounced, but there is a continuation of meetings. The responsibility is a collective responsibility, and anyone who can exert efforts, we should support that party and promote them forward.
QUESTION: Thank you. The question is for both foreign ministers. My name is Nuhamtad (ph). I'm from Egyptian television. My first question is to Dr. Rice. Secretary of State, before coming here to the region, you talked to your reporters. You said that the Arab initiative must be offered again and offered in a way that suggests a follow-up. As far as we all remember when the Arab initiative was offered back in 2002, it was ignored by the United States, let alone rejected by Israel. So what is the kind of follow-up that you are expecting from, and from who, and particularly that the Arab heavyweights – Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria – said that they are not going to do any amendments required by Israel in the Arab initiative. And the question also to Minister Aboul Gheit. My question is a follow-up on what you said that you heard from Secretary Rice's vision of the U.S. Administration of how to move ahead in the next phase. Really, we don't exactly know what are these specific steps that are going to be taken or what is this vision in order to get to the two-state solution. Thank you very much.
SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. On the Arab initiative, let me be very clear: I have not suggested and the United States Government has not suggested amendment of the Arab initiative. It is the Arab initiative and the Arab League has the right to offer it as the Arab League wishes to do. What I have said is that I hope that there will be a way of making it a basis for active diplomacy. We are in a period of time in which we believe that despite the difficulties, the possibility of pushing forward toward a two-state solution is now before us and all states, including the Arab League, those in the Arab League individually as well as the Arab League as a whole, to push forward at this time. So it is up to the Arab League, up to the Arab states, how they might use the Arab initiative for more active diplomacy. But in terms of amendment, it has not been the position of the United States that amendment is needed.
FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: (Via interpreter) Regarding the thinking that's going through the minds of Secretary Rice, I am not going to reveal what kind of conversations that we had together and it's not right for me to talk about her intentions or how she intends to move forward for the elements of talking about this. We cannot reveal what she has discussed. This is her property to talk about. Regarding the Arab initiative – (laughter). Am I to speak on your behalf while you are standing here? Of course not. May I also speak on the Arab initiative, if I may? (via interpreter) Regarding the Arab initiative, of course Egypt is committed to this initiative and we hope that the other side, the Israeli side, also will deal with this initiative positively and to move in order to resume negotiations on the basis of their logic. The initiative is a tool in order to start negotiations. It is presented in order for the Israeli to take it, deal with it, and then we launch negotiations. And we hope and we assume that in order to achieve peace, you have to negotiate peace because there are so many issues that goes to the heart of everything, which is land-for-peace. This is the heart of the negotiations that leads to borders, leads to dealing with all the elements that are on the table for the upcoming phase. Regarding the talks about amending the initiative, but of course natural that it's illogical that the Arab side would propose something and then revise it or amend it before we even hear anything from the Israeli side. So we need to hear from the Israeli side, then we launch the negotiations.
SECRETARY RICE: Helene. Helene Cooper of the New York Times.

QUESTION: Thanks. I'd like to ask both of you a question about democracy. Secretary Rice, before coming here, you said that you were disappointed in tomorrow's upcoming referendum and that you intended to raise the issue with President Mubarak. Has your talk with him allayed your concerns and have your views now changed about tomorrow's referendum? And to Mr. Aboul Gheit, many backers of the constitutional changes in Egypt have likened it to the U.S. Patriot Act. Do you agree with that? And if so, what exactly are those similarities? Thank you.
SECRETARY RICE: Well, Helene, we have had a discussion. I've made my concerns known as well as my hopes for continued reform here in Egypt. I think what I said is that the process of reform is one that is difficult; it's going to have its ups and downs. And we always discuss these matters in a way that is respectful, mutually respectful. But I've made my concerns known and we've had a good discussion.
FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: (via interpreter) Regarding the question of the Patriot Act and the relationship between the Egyptian constitutional amendments and the relationship to the Patriot Act in the United States, I believe we have to confess that Egypt has been subjected to terrorist acts over – for a period over 80 years and with the end of the Second World War, since 1945, there are and there has been extremist views on the Egyptian territories since that time in order to shake up the political structure and the economic and the social structure of the Egyptian society. The Egyptian state stood over the years and decades in order to be determined in protecting internal peace and achieve the stability of the Egyptian society. This is the responsibility of the society towards itself before it is its responsibility towards the region or the international community. Egypt has reaffirmed many times it is a central country in this part of the world, and if Egypt is shaken, the region will be shaken. Therefore Egypt's determination and capability not only to establish internal stability and achieve social and economic development through laws and legislation with vision and objectives, the Egyptian stability has its own positive impact on the regional policies. Therefore Egypt adheres to all the laws that allows the state to achieve its own security and the security of the region. Therefore any procedures to secure the American citizens and facilitate life, this is something we will adhere to. Regarding the details of the Patriot Act, I am not familiar with many of the elements of that law and I will not be able really to comment on something and compare between it and between Egyptian laws.
QUESTION: Thank you very much. My question is for you, Ms. Madame Secretary. Here in Egypt and maybe in the Arab world we were expecting that before you launched your visit this time to Egypt and to the region that you will declare more or you will tell us more about the steps or the vision that the United States will take to realize the Palestinian and the Israeli peace. Instead of criticizing something which is maybe an internal affair to Egypt, this is something, an internal effort to Egypt which is concerned with the constitution and there are really at the same time some concerns in the Arab and Egypt press the democracy and security in Iraq are not happened till now. What's your comment about it?
SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, the President has made very clear that he is very committed to democracy in the Middle East. President Bush gave a speech in his Second Inaugural that was very clear about that, and that this is a conversation we would have with all of our friends. We recognize that states do this in their own way and that they do it in a way that is consistent with their own cultural circumstances and others, but the President is committed to this vision of democracy in the Middle East and we're going to remain committed to it. And Egypt is very special. Egypt is a leader in the Arab world. And so it's not surprising that people are interested in what is going on internally in Egypt. It's not a matter to try to dictate to Egypt how this unfolds, but it is a matter to say that Egypt is an extremely important country; that when Egypt leads, people listen. And so that's the spirit in which the democracy agenda has been followed by the United States. We know that democracy is not easy and it takes time. The United States has had its own struggles. Forty years ago in the United States, it was still not the case that every American could be assured the right to vote. I grew up in the South where the Voting Rights Act in 1965 made that possible. And so it's a long struggle and it's a long journey, but it's important that that journey be begun and the President has made very clear that he believes that it's no different in the Middle East than

anyplace else. Now, as to Iraq, it is a struggle for the Iraqis. They have been able with the help of the United States and the coalition to overthrow one of the bloodiest tyrants of 20th century and the early 21st century, someone who put 300,000 of its people in mass graves, who used chemical weapons and who terrorized the region and pulled the United States into war in 1991. He is now gone. But the fact is that it's time to build a stable, democratic system where people of very longstanding differences come together to resolve their differences through politics, not through violence. It's hard. It's a struggle. And it is a struggle that is being made more difficult by extremists on very many sides of their conflict who want to prevent Iraqis from doing exactly that. And these are people who don't have a political agenda that is a positive agenda for Iraq, but they blow up innocent school children or they blow up Iraqis standing trying to get a job in line. So there is no doubt that it's difficult, but the Iraqi people have a chance to do something very special, which is in a very complex state in the Middle East to solve their differences through political institutions that are democratic. And the United States is going to be a strong supporter of that effort. I said to the Minister earlier we appreciate the efforts of Egypt, which frankly has been one of the leaders in the Arab world in reaching out to the Iraqis, to affirm Iraq's position in the Arab world. I want to remember the sacrifice of Egypt, who lost an ambassador in Iraq. So Egypt has been committed to trying to help the Iraqis in this cause, but it's hard. It's really hard to build a democracy when extremists are trying to prevent it from happening.
FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: (via interpreter) As you say, as you hear, the U.S. Secretary of State talks about the Egyptian role and the centrality of the Egyptian role to move the achievement of peace in that part of the world. As far as Egypt is concerned, we seek to work very actively not only on the regional scene but also in order to develop socially and economically this country and this society. President Mubarak in his own election platform and program talked about the Egyptian efforts in order to modify the constitution and the Egyptian laws in a way that would allow for more democracy, more Egyptian democracy. I would like to say to Dr. Rice that if you look through the window of your street here, you will see groups of granite rocks, a whole mountain of granite. This is the Egyptian spirit. The Egyptian spirit is as solid as granite. It's capable of going through the journey with solid steps forward in order to achieve the objective.
SECRETARY RICE: I believe that very strongly. (Laughter.)
QUESTION: Madame Secretary, you called for everyone to search deep to see what they could do to promote things. From your conversations last night, did you get any sense from particularly the two nations that do not have peace agreements with Israel that there is a willingness, notably on the part of the Saudis, to dig deep to do more? And Mr. Foreign Minister, could you explain why the Egyptian Government decided to schedule the vote on the referendum only one week after its passage in the parliament? And could you directly address the criticism of many human rights groups that it is, in fact, pushing back or taking a step backward on democracy, particularly by enshrining in the constitution powers of arrest, surveillance, referring prosecutions to special courts?
FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: (Via interpreter.) Sir, I would like to be very blunt with you. With all frankness, the responsibility of security in the Egyptian society is an Egyptian responsibility and will remain as an Egyptian responsibility. There is a direct threat to the Egyptian state and the Egyptian society through terrorist acts. I doubt you know the details. We know the details. An Israeli prime minister was assassinated in 1944 or 1945[?]. An Israeli prime minister was assassinated in 1946 [?]. An Egyptian president was assassinated in 1981 [Anwar Sadat]. Many and numerous attempts took place against Egyptian presidents and prime ministers and against Egyptian ministers and against Egyptian officials. One of the great characteristics of Egypt is security in the society and Egypt's capability to provide security to its sons and daughters. This is the responsibility of the Egyptian society. And when the issue is related to terrorism, I trust that Egyptian laws and through the framework of the Egyptian constitution will achieve security to this society under very difficult circumstances for the entire region. Regarding what some might say or some of the opposition and the voices from opposition groups regarding accelerating the referendum date, this is an issue of timing. There was an approval on the amendments and there are different dates and calendars in the Egyptian thinking that must be taken into consideration. Perhaps you don't know much about

an event called Moulid an-Nabi or the spring day vacation which is called Sham El-Nessim. There are many holidays in Egypt where the entire country really disappears and people go into their vacations. Therefore seeing that this particular timing is an appropriate time, this is a way to make sure that people will be able to enjoy their life and their vacation, especially that the referendum and the amendments have been approved by the Egyptian parliaments.
The Egyptian internal developments see a leap forward unprecedented in Egyptian history, and we mean but [?] by the end of all these reform steps, we hope that we will reach a phase that would allow the Egyptian citizen and Egyptian society more democracy and open more and more for the region.
SECRETARY RICE: And as to the question of what other states might do, it is a time to search deep. I found the discussion last night extremely fulfilling because I think people were talking about how to solve problems, how to move forward. It was an excellent discussion also because it was open and candid, and that is the only way that we're going to make progress. It's the only way that all states are going to do their part in the search for peace. And I hope we'll have many more like that. It was a very good discussion.
FOREIGN MINISTER GHEIT: Thank you.
SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

[69] Text der „Road Map“ in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente“ dieser Homepage.

[70] Remarks With Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Secretary Condoleezza Rice, Joint Press Availability, Ramallah, March 25, 2007:
PRESIDENT ABBAS: (via interpreter) In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate, once again we welcome Dr. Rice and her visit here. This visit, like other visits, comes within the framework of the efforts, continuous efforts, made by the American Administration and President Bush and Dr. Rice as well to seek a political solution to explore the horizons for a political settlement in order to implement President Bush's vision which we all know and which speaks of two states, the state called Palestine living side by side with the state of Israel. And today we discussed all these issues. We talked about all of the developments that took place since Dr. Rice's last visit to date. We can tell the relationship with the Israelis as well as the meeting I had with the Prime Minister – Israeli Prime Minister and the agenda for other meetings which will take place with the Israeli Prime Minister. All of these meetings come within the framework of bilateral relations between us and the Israelis, of course, in addition to the vision of the future which we all aspire for and endeavor to achieve. We talked today as well of issues related to settlement expansion which are continually taking place and impeding the peace process. We talked of Israeli Corporal Shalit and Israel's need to release him. Of course we talked about Palestinian (inaudible) and the – a cooling-down in general in the areas in the areas of the West Bank and Gaza and a mutual calm between us and the Israelis. Finally, we addressed the expected prospects of the Arab summit and the issues that has been entered on its agenda, particularly issues related to the Roadmap which includes the Arab initiative, from our point of view, of course, and we do not have (inaudible) on this. The Arab initiative needs to be reactivated and we must seek different ways to activate not only the Arab initiative but also the peace process as a whole. We will proceed with our meetings with Madame Secretary from time to time for this effort and we do appreciate her efforts and we thank her for giving a lot of her valuable time to the Palestinian cause. Welcome, Dr. Rice.
SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much. And thank you, Mr. President. Thank you very much for welcoming me here again and for your continued leadership and integrity in this process of trying to come to a two-state solution where Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side in peace. The President and I discussed the efforts that I will be making here in the region. I will meet with Prime Minister Olmert tonight. I will then, of course, meet with the President again tomorrow and then before I leave again with the Israelis because I think it's extremely important to begin to establish in parallel a common agenda to move forward toward the establishment of a Palestinian state, and in order to do that we have to begin a discussion of the political horizon so that we can show to the Palestinian people as

well as to the Israeli people that there is indeed hope for the kind of peace that will come when the Palestinians have their own state, their own democratic and peaceful state, and when the Israeli people have the peace and security that can only come from having a democratic and stable neighbor. And so we have had a good discussion of that. And we've also discussed, as the President said, the Arab initiative. I was very interested in his ideas concerning the Arab initiative because perhaps it does offer an opportunity and a way to also have a prospect for Arab-Israeli reconciliation, all of which together with the establishment of a Palestinian state would make for a much more peaceful and hopeful and prosperous Middle East. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for our good discussions and I look forward to continuing them.
PRESIDENT ABBAS: (via interpreter) Thank you.
QUESTION: (via interpreter) Madame Secretary, is there any (inaudible) that you have (inaudible) regarding the implementation of the Arab initiative and resumption of the peace process?
SECRETARY RICE: Well, on the peace process, we are talking a great deal about how we can resume the peace process. But on the Arab initiative, I've made very clear that it is not the position of the United States that the Arabs need to make changes to their initiative. I hope that it will be reactivated in some way. I hope that it will become a platform, a way for active diplomacy. But it is an Arab initiative; others will have other views and other proposals. But the important thing is to get a conversation started about how we have the prospect of a political horizon for the Palestinian people and a political horizon of peace for Arabs and Israelis in general.
QUESTION: Secretary Rice, we all know what the Clinton parameters looked like. We have all read the Roadmap. The questions are pretty well known and the contours of a Palestinian state are relatively evident. Can you explain what is different about this "in parallel" approach you are trying to develop? And then for President Abbas, Prime Minister Olmert said you have repeatedly promised that Corporal Shalit would be released before the unity government was formed, and you even made that promise in front of Secretary Rice last month. How can you build trust with the Israelis on a broader peace deal when you're unable to free a single soldier after nine months? Thank you.
SECRETARY RICE: Glenn, every effort is different and we are in a different situation than in 2000. I've said very often in some ways it's more complicated than 2000; in some ways it's better than 2000. We have established a basis among a broad array of states – Arab, all of the Arab states, as well Palestinians and Israelis – that a two-state solution is the way to peace. That had not been established in 2000. And so I think we now are dealing from a framework that is different. The Roadmap is really a kind of framework. It has a very important status because it is accepted by all the parties as a reliable guide to a two-state solution. But obviously we need to be able to, in a sense, fill in some of the details about how we're going to use the Roadmap to get to the end state. I've always believed that it is extremely important that the conditions of the Roadmap be fulfilled. There's a natural sequence in the Roadmap that needs to be fulfilled. But it doesn't prevent us from discussing the destination to which we're going, and that really is what I hope the parallel process will begin to move us toward as I discuss this with both parties. We did this in a trilateral [way] the last time that I was here. It was a time of some considerable uncertainty given that the Mecca agreement [of February 8, 2007] had just been signed. Now we are in a situation in which I think a bilateral approach in which I talk in parallel to the parties from a common approach is the best way. We'll use many different geometries, I'm sure, as we go through this process, but the key is to continue down this road toward a two-state solution. The President has been very clear. He was very clear just a couple of days ago that he considers the establishment of a Palestinian state and peace in the Middle East to be among one of his highest priorities, and as his Secretary of State I intend to pursue that.
PRESIDENT ABBAS: (Via interpreter.) Regarding the Israeli corporal, we sense that he was kidnapped or held back. We tried to release him alive and it is our responsibility to preserve his life and to have him released alive. And this took us such a long time which has lasted so far and he's still not acquitted. However, we are (inaudible) and he is in a good condition and he's alive and we want him to return to his family alive. And continuously when we speak of the Israeli corporal, we must speak of Palestinian prisoners and we discussed this lengthily with Prime

Minister Olmert and in my last meeting with him we discussed in detail this issue and we laid down some joint ideas which could contribute to releasing him. We keep this idea until we make sure that things are moving ahead.
QUESTION: (via interpreter) Mr. President, there are demands by certain entities to amend the Arab initiative, especially the articles related to refugees. Secretary Rice, actually, I have two questions for you. Do you have any action plan to energize the peace process? Especially we have some Palestinian officials who say that until now your trips have achieved thus far nothing. On the other hand, the other question, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert is saying that his future dealing with President Abbas will be on the grounds of issues related to security and humanitarian issues. How you're going to kick-start peacemaking and you have Mr. Olmert saying that he will not be basically dealing with peacemaking when it comes to President Abbas?
PRESIDENT ABBAS: (Via interpreter.) Regarding your first question, you know that the Arab initiative when it was launched, it was highly welcomed in different Arab and international circles and also in the Israeli circles. This initiative has become an important part of the Roadmap plan adopted by the Quartet. The Roadmap has become a resolution of the Security Council with the number 1515. I didn't hear anybody saying that you need to amend or change or alter any of the articles of the Arab initiative.
SECRETARY RICE: Well, let's see. I've been here four times in four months, but of course this conflict is decades old; so I assume that if somebody could have resolved it before me, they would have done it by now. What I am doing is I'm devoted to trying to bring about the President's two-state solution. I think we sometimes underestimate how much progress really has been made over these decades. We are a long way from where we were when this conflict started. There have been a number of efforts for peace that have been resolved, for instance, the Egyptian-Israeli conflict, the Jordanian-Israeli conflict, indeed the efforts after Madrid that led to Oslo, giving us the basis on which really I'm standing here talking to the President today. The President's speech in which he said that a Palestinian state should exist – I think he even called it Palestine – as policy for the United States moved this clearly forward, as did the speech of Prime Minister Sharon which talked about the need for painful compromises on the part of Israel to divide the land and to share the land. I think sometimes we don't recognize that we have been through a steady series of steps forward. Sometimes there have also been steps backward. That is always the case with big historical changes. But it is really the obligation of each and every one of us who finds themselves in a position like I now find myself to try and push forward, to try and move the ball forward, to try to move the Palestinian state forward. And one day, I certainly hope soon, we're going to fully succeed. But this is a hard problem. There are a lot of difficult issues, a lot of emotional issues, a lot of practical issues as well. And what I hope to do is to take some of the lessons of the past, and one of those lessons is that you need to prepare the ground well, you need to spend time with the parties, you need to understand what is tolerable for each side, and then you have to have a commitment by the President of the United States, the international community, the Arab states which have to be committed to this process and have to be willing to do what it will take to get a Palestinian state. And I think if we all search very deep now and ask ourselves to look back and to say what has not worked, and now to look forward and to say what can we do to succeed this time, then we have a real chance. But I am optimistic that with a real effort by all parties we can succeed.
QUESTION: (Off-mike.)
SECRETARY RICE: The other part was? Yes, can you remind me?
QUESTION: The other part was – has to do with Mr. Olmert's remarks.
SECRETARY RICE: Yes, yes. Well, I think that it is extremely important that there be a political horizon for the Palestinian people. I understand fully that this comes in the context of the Roadmap, that there are obligations in the Roadmap that anyone can see [that it] will have to be met before there can be the establishment of a Palestinian state. You would have to have a renunciation of violence as a foundational principle for peace. Obviously you would have to recognize the right of the other party to exist. It would be important to build on past agreements. That goes without saying, and the Roadmap has a series of obligations that will have to be met. But I think it can help all of us to have a destination in mind to which we're

going, and that is really what is meant by political horizon. I think this time it is best to talk about that political horizon in parallel, but I sincerely hope that in the future the parties themselves can talk about that political horizon among themselves. David, yes.
QUESTION: President Abbas, Secretary Rice has again tonight outlined her new approach of parallel discussions with Israelis and Palestinians to define a common approach to your problems and differences. Would you like to see a more forceful U.S. role in bringing Israel back into full and direct negotiations to resolve those problems, and would you welcome Secretary Rice's own ideas for how to advance the peace process? And for Secretary Rice, you said you want to come up with a set of issues to raise with both Palestinians and Israelis. Has President Abbas given you such a set of ideas to take to the Israeli side?
PRESIDENT ABBAS: (via interpreter) I think that we agree with Dr. Rice on the approach to deal with both parties and therefore we say that we are fully satisfied with this way of action which we hope will be fruitful and with tangible results in the future.
SECRETARY RICE: President Abbas and I are going to have a number of discussions over, I think, an extended period of time. And what I don't intend to do is to always go to the press and say exactly what he said to me. I think that would not help to build confidence between us, it will not help to build confidence between me and Prime Minister Olmert were I to do that. I do think that it is now important that we have discussions in which the President and the Prime Minister can be as open and as candid as they would like to be about what in this longstanding conflict it will take, what issues have to be resolved, in order to resolve this longstanding conflict. And so I can tell you that the commitment of the United States to using this approach now, but to using various approaches as we go along so that we can realize the President's vision of two states living side by side –and it's not just the President's vision. It has long been the vision of the international community as recorded in multiple UN Security Council resolutions. It has long been the vision of the Palestinian people and I think the Israeli people that they can live in peace. And so we're going to pursue that goal as vigorously as possible. Thank you.

[71] Thomas Friedman: Abdullah's Chance, in "New York Times" 23.03.2007:
Is Saudi Arabia becoming the new Egypt?
That's a question you hear more and more these days in Arab circles, as Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah becomes more diplomatically active and Egypt, the traditional leader of the Arab world, becomes more diplomatically passive.
In recent months, we've seen Saudi Arabia publicly blast Hezbollah for launching an unprovoked war on Israel; we've seen King Abdullah forge a cease-fire between Hamas and Fatah in Gaza; we've seen him try to tame Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and there are rumors that a top Saudi official met with Israel's prime minister, Ehud Olmert. That meeting was apparently in preparation for the Arab summit in Riyadh, March 28-29, which King Abdullah will be hosting to revive his February 2002 peace overture to Israel of full normalization of relations in return for full withdrawal from the occupied territories.
Since Egypt, for now, seems to be adrift, and the Saudis seem to be afloat in oil revenues, it's not surprising to see Saudi Arabia becoming more assertive. It could have real benefits —given the Saudis' standing in the Muslim world — provided that the leader of Saudi Arabia is ready to do what the leader of Egypt did when it comes to making peace with Israel.
What the moribund Israeli-Palestinian talks need most today is an emotional breakthrough. Another Arab declaration, just reaffirming the Abdullah initiative, won't cut it. If King Abdullah wants to lead — and he has the integrity and credibility to do so — he needs to fly from the Riyadh summit to Jerusalem and deliver the offer personally to the Israeli people.
That is what Egypt's Anwar Sadat did when he forged his breakthrough. If King Abdullah did the same, he could end this conflict once and for all.
I would humbly suggest the Saudi king make four stops. His first stop should be to Al Aksa Mosque in East Jerusalem, the third holiest site in Islam. There, he, the custodian of Mecca and Medina, could reaffirm the Muslim claim to Arab East Jerusalem by praying at Al Aksa.

From there, he could travel to Ramallah and address the Palestinian parliament, making clear that the Abdullah initiative aims to give Palestinians the leverage to offer Israel peace with the whole Arab world in return for full withdrawal. And he might add that whatever deal the Palestinians cut with Israel regarding return of refugees or land swaps — so some settlements might stay in the West Bank in return for the Palestinians getting pieces of Israel — the Arab world would support. From there, King Abdullah could helicopter to Yad Vashem, the memorial to the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust. A visit there would seal the deal with Israelis and affirm that the Muslim world rejects the Holocaust denialism of Iran. Then he could go to the Israeli parliament and formally deliver his peace initiative.
Of course, I have no illusions about this. But is it any more illusory than thinking that the incrementalism of the last seven years is going to get anywhere? Now that's a fantasy. Yes, Al Qaeda would denounce King Abdullah. What else is new? The Saudi ruling family is going to have to decide: Is it going to spend the rest of its days tiptoeing around Al Qaeda, or is it going to confront it — ideologically — head on? Many more Muslims would applaud the Saudi king for such an overture. And I have no doubt that Israel's majority, which was ready to evacuate Gaza for nothing, would demand that the Israeli government respond positively to an Abdullah initiative delivered in this way.
This would also be a vehicle to tell Hamas to put up or shut up. It is one thing for Hamas to reject the Oslo peace accords. But how could it reject a peace overture to Israel presented by Saudi Arabia?
King Abdullah first unveiled his peace proposal in an interview he and I did in his home in Riyadh in 2002. As we sat by his desk, he told me he was motivated to propose full peace for full withdrawal to the Israelis because "I wanted to find a way to make clear to the Israeli people that the Arabs don't reject or despise them. But the Arab people do reject what their leadership is now doing to the Palestinians, which is inhumane and oppressive. And I thought of this as a possible signal to the Israeli people." Well, it is time to go beyond signals. If the Saudi king just wants to score some points, he will hold the Arab summit, re-issue the peace plan and go home. If he wants to make history and make peace, he will hold the Arab summit, re-issue the peace plan and deliver it in person.

[72] Quartet Principals Discuss Establishment of Unity Gov't, vi:
BRUSSELS, MARCH 21, 2007 (WAFA – PLO news agency) The Quartet Principals discussed on Wednesday by telephone the situation in the Middle East, and in particular the establishment of a Palestinian National Unity Government.
The Principals- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, High Representative for European Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner – reiterated their respect for Palestinian democracy and the agreement reached in Mecca on 8 February 2007, which laid the foundation for Palestinian reconciliation.
The Quartet expressed hope that the establishment of a new government on 17 March 2007 would help end intra-Palestinian violence and ensure calm. It also reaffirmed its previous statements with regard to the need for a Palestinian government committed to nonviolence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap, and encouraged progress in this direction, agreeing that the commitment of the new government in this regard will be measured not only on the basis of its composition and platform, but also its actions.
The Committee expressed its expectation that the unity government will act responsibly, demonstrate clear and credible commitment to the Quartet principles, and support the efforts of President Abbas to pursue a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, thereby achieving the peace, security, and freedom the Israeli and Palestinian people desire and deserve.
"The Quartet reiterated the continuing need to coordinate and mobilize international assistance in support of the Palestinian people, and endorsed the continuation of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) for a three-month period while it evaluates the situation and the international community works to develop a more

sustainable international mechanism for support to the Palestinians," said a statement by the Committee.
The Quartet expressed its strong support for Secretary Rice's efforts to further facilitate discussions with President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert with the aim of defining more clearly the political horizon for the establishment of a Palestinian state and an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
The Quartet also agreed to meet in the region soon to review developments and discuss the way ahead.

[73] Egypt: Proposed constitutional amendments greatest erosion of human rights in 26 years: Egypt: Proposed constitutional amendments greatest erosion of human rights in 26 years, 20.03.2007:
Amnesty International today called on Egyptian members of parliament to reject proposed amendments to the country's constitution, which the organisation described as the most serious undermining of human rights safeguards in Egypt since the state of emergency was re-imposed in 1981.
The appeal came as the Egyptian Parliament prepared to approve this Sunday amendments to 34 articles of the constitution, including Article 179. The amendments to this Article would give sweeping powers of arrest to the police, grant broad authority to monitor private communications and allow the Egyptian president to bypass ordinary courts and refer people suspected of terrorism to military and special courts, in which they would be unlikely to receive fair trials.
"The proposed constitutional amendments would simply entrench the long-standing system of abuse under Egypt's state of emergency powers and give the misuse of those powers a bogus legitimacy. Instead of putting an end to the secret detentions, enforced "disappearances", torture and unfair trials before emergency and military courts, Egyptian MPs are now being asked to sign away even the constitutional protections against such human rights violations," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa programme.
The amendment of Article 179 would pave the way for the introduction of a new anti-terrorism law that would undermine the principle of individual freedom [Article 41(1)], privacy of the home [Article 44] and privacy of correspondence, telephone calls and other communication [Article 45(2)]. The amendments would also grant the president the right to interfere in the judiciary by bypassing ordinary courts, including by referring people suspected of terrorism-related offences to military courts.
If approved by parliament, the amendments to Article 179 will be put to a popular referendum on 4 April along with amendments to 33 other articles of the Constitution. Egyptian NGOs and others have also expressed grave concerns about these other amendments including those which would ban the establishment of political parties based on religion and reduce the role of the judges in supervising elections and referendums. The first is seen as part of a government strategy to undermine the opposition Muslim Brotherhood following its improved showing in the 2005 elections. The second is seen as an attempt to prevent any repetition of events last year, when two leading judges denounced the government's failure to take action in response to evidence of electoral fraud during the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2005.
The amendments are being presented to MPs as a package on which they must vote yes or no. They cannot accept some and reject others, nor can they open up any of the proposed amendments for further parliamentary review.
"Amnesty International recognises the threat posed to Egypt by terrorism, but respect for and protection of fundamental human rights cannot simply be swept away by a majority vote," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.
"By pushing through these amendments, the government will write into the permanent law emergency-style powers that have been used to violate human rights over more than two decades, so that when it then bows at last to international criticism and lifts the state of emergency the impact will be no more than cosmetic. The parliament should not rubber stamp this. Instead, it should reject the amendments and insist that Egypt's national law adequately safeguards the universal rights enshrined under international law which Egypt has committed, but so conspicuously failed, to uphold."

Amnesty International firmly believes that the current constitutional reform must be seized as an opportunity to further strengthen human rights protection and to break with the practices of the past. None of the provisions of the emergency legislation should be entrenched in the new law or protected by the constitution.
Background
The proposed amendment of Article 179 stipulates the following: "The State shall work to safeguard the general discipline and security in the face of the dangers of terror. The law shall regulate the provisions related to the measures of conclusion and investigation necessary for combating those dangers under the supervision of the Judiciary in a way that the measure stipulated in the first paragraph of Article 41 and Article 44 and the second paragraph of Article 45 of the Constitution not to hinder putting those provisions into effect. The President of the Republic may submit any crime of terror crimes to any judicial body stipulated in the Constitution or the law."
Demonstrators calling for rejection of the constitutional amendments were dispersed by police in Cairo on Friday. Scores were arrested and detained; most were quickly released but some 23 have been charged with public order offences.

[74] List of the 25 ministers in the new Palestinian government, according to the official Palestinian news agency WAFA:
Prime Minister: Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas;
Deputy Prime Minister: Azzam al-Ahmed, Fatah;
Foreign Minister: Ziad Abu Amr, Independent;
Finance Minister: Salam Fayyad, Independent;
Interior Minister: Hani Kawasmeh, Independent;
Information Minister: Mustafa Barghouti, Independent;
Telecommunication and Technology Minister: Yousef al-Mansi, Hamas;
Waqf and Religious Affairs Minister: Mohammed Tartouri, Hamas;
Planning Minister: Samir Abu Eisha, Hamas-backed Independent;
Local Governments Minister: Mohammed Barghouti, Hamas;
Youth and Sports Minister: Bassem Naim, Hamas;
Economics Minister: Ziad Zaza, Hamas;
Justice Minister: Ali Sartawi, Hamas;
Education Minister: Nasser al-Shaer, Hamas-backed Independent;
Agriculture Minister: Mohammed al-Agha, Hamas;
Minister for Women's Affairs: (Mrs.) Amal Siyam, Hamas;
Tourism Minister: (Mrs.) Khouloud Ihadeb Deibas, Independent;
Health Minister: Radwan al-Akhras, Fatah;
Transportation Minister: Saadi al-Krunz, Fatah;
Labor Minister: Mahmoud Aloul, Fatah;
Public Works Minister: Samih al-Abed, Fatah;
Minister for Prisoner Affairs: Tayseee Abu Sneineh, Fatah;
Culture Minister: Bassam Salhi, Peoples Party (Communist);
Social Affairs Minister: Saleh Zidan, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine;
Minister without portfolio: Wasfi Kabaha, Hamas.

[75] Text of the National Conciliation Documents of the Prisoners, 28.06.2006:
In the name of God, the Compassionate and the Merciful, "Abide by the decree of God and never disperse"
Based on the high sense of historical national responsibility and in light of the dangers facing our people and based on the principle saying that rights don't fall by law of limitations, and on the basis of no recognition of the legitimacy of occupation and for the sake of reinforcing the internal Palestinian front and maintain and protect the national unity and the unity of our people in the homeland and in the Diaspora and in order to confront the Israeli scheme that aims to impose the Israeli solution and to blow up the dream and right of our people in establishing their independent state with full sovereignty; this scheme that the Israeli government intends to execute in the next phase based on concluding the apartheid wall and the Judaization of Jerusalem and expansion of the Israeli settlements and the seizure of the Jordan Valley and the annexation of large areas from the West Bank and blocking the path in front of our people in exercising their right in return.

…towards safeguarding the accomplishments of our people throughout this long struggle and out of loyalty to our martyrs, prisoners and our injured and given that we are still in the a phase of liberation, this necessitates that we formulate a political strategy. Therefore, with the goal of making our comprehensive national dialogue a success, based on the Cairo Declaration and coupled with the urgent need for unity and solidarity, we put forth this document (the national conciliation document) to our people, President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), the PLO leadership, Prime Minister Ismail Hanieh, the Council of Ministers, the Speaker and members of the PNC, the Speaker and members of the PLC, all Palestinian forces and factions, all nongovernmental and popular organizations and institutions and to the popular leadership of the Palestinians in the homeland and in the Diaspora.
This document is being put forth as a complete package and the introduction is part of it:

1. The Palestinian people in the homeland and in the Diaspora seek and struggle to liberate their land and remove the settlements and evacuate the settlers and remove the apartheid and annexation and separation wall and to achieve their right to freedom, return and independence and to exercise their right to self-determination, including the right to establish their independent state with al-Quds al-Shareef as its capital on all territories occupied in 1967, and to secure the right of return for refugees to their homes and properties from which they were evicted and to compensate them and to liberate all prisoners and detainees without any discrimination and all of this is based on the historical right of our people on the land of our forefathers and based on the UN Charter and international law and legitimacy in a way that does not affect the rights of our people.
2. To speed up efforts to achieve that which was agreed on in Cairo in March 2005 pertaining to the development and reactivation of the PLO and the participation of all forces and factions to it according to democratic principles that reinforce the status of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people wherever they are in a manner that meets with the changes on the Palestinian arena and in a manner that consolidates the authority of the PLO to assume its responsibilities in leading our people in the homeland and the Diaspora. The PLO should also be the body that mobilizes the people in defending their national, political and humanitarian rights in the various fora and circles and in the international and regional arenas. Furthermore, our national interest stipulates the formation of a new Palestinian National Council before the end of 2006 in a manner that secures the representation of all Palestinian national and Islamic forces, factions and parties and all sectors of our people through elections, where possible, according to proportional representation, and through agreement where it is not possible to hold elections according to mechanisms set up by the Higher Committee resulting from the Cairo Dialogue. The PLO therefore, will remain a broad front and framework and a comprehensive national coalition and the higher political reference for all the Palestinians in the homeland and in the Diaspora.
3. The right of the Palestinian people to resist and to uphold the option of resistance of occupation by various means and focusing resistance in territories occupied in 1967 in tandem with political action, negotiations and diplomacy whereby there is broad participation from all sectors in the popular resistance.
4. To formulate a Palestinian plan aimed at comprehensive political action; to unify Palestinian political discourse on the basis of the Palestinian national goals as mentioned in this document and according to Arab legitimacy and international legitimacy resolutions that grant justice to the Palestinian people maintaining their rights and constants to be implemented by the PLO leadership and its institutions, and the PNA represented in president and government, the national and Islamic factions, the civil society organizations and public figures. This is aimed at mobilizing Arab, Islamic and international political, financial, economic and humanitarian support and solidarity with our people and the PNA and to gain support for the right of our people to self-determination, freedom, return and independence; furthermore, it is aimed at confronting Israel's plan to impose any unilateral solution on our people and to confront the oppressive siege.
5. To protect and support the PNA since it is the nucleus of the future state and was born of the struggle and sacrifices of the Palestinian people; to stress that higher national interests call for respecting the "Basic Law" of the PNA and the effective laws and for respecting the responsibilities and authorities of the president elected

according to the will of the Palestinian people through free, honest and democratic elections. It also calls for respecting the responsibilities and authorities of the government granted by a vote of confidence from the PLC which came through free and honest and democratic elections and stress on the importance and need for creative cooperation between the presidency and the government; there should be joint action and regular meetings between them to achieve and reinforce cooperation and integration according to the provisions of the Basic Law and the higher national interests and for the need for comprehensive reforms in PNA institutions, especially the judiciary whereby the judiciary authority should be respected at all levels, its rulings implemented reinforce the rule of the law.

6. To work on forming a national unity government that secures the participation of parliamentary blocs and political forces interested in participating on the basis of this document and the joint program to upgrade the Palestinian situation at the local, Arab, regional and international levels. Their goal is also to implement the reform program and develop the national economy and encourage investment and fight poverty and unemployment and provide best possible care for the sectors that carried the burden of steadfastness, resistance and the Intifada and who were the victims of the Israeli aggression. In particular, this refers to the families of martyrs, prisoners and injured and the owners of demolished homes and properties, destroyed by the occupation, and the unemployed and graduates.
7. Administration of the negotiations falls within the jurisdiction of the PLO and the President of the PNA, which will be on the basis of adhering to Palestinian national goals as mentioned in this document on condition that any agreement must be presented to the new PNC for ratification or a general referendum to be held in the homeland and the Diaspora through organizing the referendum.
8. Liberation of the prisoners and detainees is a sacred national duty that must be assumed by all Palestinian national and Islamic forces and factions, the PLO and the PNA represented in President and government, the PLC and all resistance forces.
9. Stressing on the need to double our efforts to support and care for the refugees and defend their rights and work on holding a popular conference representing the refugees that would create commissions to carry out duties towards the refugees and to stress on the right of return; the international community should also be pressured to implement Resolution 194 which stipulates the right of refugees to return and to be compensated.
10. To work on forming a unified resistance front called the "Palestinian Resistance Front" to lead and engage in resistance against the occupation and to unify and coordinate resistance action and work on defining a unified political reference for the front.
11. To cling to the principles of democracy and to hold regular, general, free and honest democratic elections according to the law for the presidency, the PLC and the local and municipal councils and trade unions and federations and to respect the principle of a peaceful and smooth transfer of authority and to stress on the principle of separation of authorities; the Palestinian democratic experience should be protected and any democratic choice and its results respected; furthermore, there should be respect for the rule of the law, public and fundamental freedoms, freedom of the press and equality among the citizens in rights and duties without discrimination; the achievements of women should be respected and further developed and promoted.
12. To reject and denounce the oppressive siege on the Palestinian people being led by the US and Israel and to call on the Arabs at the popular and official levels to support the Palestinian people, the PLO and the PNA and to call on the Arab governments to implement the political, financial, economic, and media decisions of the Arab summits that support the Palestinian people and their national cause; to stress that the PNA is committed to the Arab consensus and to joint Arab action that supports our just cause and the higher Arab interests.
13. To call on the Palestinian people to strive for unity and solidarity, to unify their ranks and to support the PLO and PNA represented in president and government; to endorse the people’s steadfastness and resistance in the face of Israeli aggression and siege and to reject any interference in internal Palestinian affairs.
14. To denounce all forms of division that could lead to internal strife; to condemn the use of weapons in settling internal disputes and to ban the use of weapons among

the people; to stress on the sanctity of Palestinian blood and to adhere to dialogue as the sole means of resolving disagreements. There should be freedom of expression through the media, which also applies to any party in opposition to the authority and its decisions in accordance with the law; adherence to the right to peaceful protest and to organize marches, demonstrations and sit-ins on condition that they be peaceful and unarmed and do not attack the property of citizens or public property.

15. The national interest necessitates the need to find the best means of allowing our people and their political forces in the Gaza Strip to participate in the battle for freedom, return and independence while bearing in mind the new situation in Gaza strip as true elevation and power for the steadfastness of our people and on the base of using the struggle methods of resisting the occupation while taking into consideration the higher interests of our people.
16. The need to reform and develop the Palestinian security system in all its branches in a modern manner that allows them to assume their responsibilities in defending the homeland and people and in confronting the aggression and the occupation; their duties also include maintaining security and public order, enforcing laws, ending the state of security chaos and lawlessness, ending the public show of arms and parades and confiscating any weapons that harm the resistance and distort its image or those that threaten the unity of Palestinian society; there is also a need to coordinate and organize the relationship between the security forces and the resistance and organize and protect their weapons.
17. To call on the PLC to continue issuing laws that regulate the work of the security apparatus in its various branches and to work towards issuing a law that bans the exercise of political and partisan action by members of the security services whereby they are required to abide by the elected political reference as defined by law.
18. To work on expanding the role and presence of international solidarity committees and peace-loving groups that support our people in their just struggle against the occupation, settlements and the apartheid wall both politically and locally; to work towards the implementation of the International Court of Justice ruling at The Hague pertaining to the dismantlement of the wall and settlements and their illegitimate presence.

[76] The Program of the national Unity Government, March 2007, via www.jmcc.org/politics/pna/nationalgovprog.htm:

In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate,
The Program of the national unity government,

The Palestinian people have lived for more than 60 years under the yoke of dispersion, deprivation and eviction and suffered due to occupation all kinds of suffering and oppression and aggression while our people marked a long process of struggle, resistance, perseverance, and resilience through which they sacrificed hundreds of thousands of martyrs and injured and prisoners and gave the best examples of sacrifice and self denial and giving and clinging to their rights and constants moving through important historical phases until we reached the phase of the national unity government (the eleventh government).

This government was born after many efforts exerted by the loyal members of our people who worked day and night to reach a reconciliatory vision and common denominators that gather all Palestinians under one umbrella.

This government came as a fruit of the positive spirit and mutual confidence that resulted in solving all issues in the various fields and this government is one of the major and leading results of the blessed Mecca Agreement under the sponsorship of the Saudi King Abdul Aziz. The national unity government is the culmination of a long series of Palestinian dialogues where Egypt and Syria had a leading role in sponsoring these dialogues and following them up with appreciated efforts by several brotherly Arab countries and the Arab and Islamic organizations. It also reflects the devotion and loyalty to the long process of martyrs and the pains of the prisoners and injured, mainly the major martyrs the late president Yasser Arafat and Sheikh Imam Ahmad Yaseen and Leader Abu Ali Mustafa and leader Fathi al-Shiqaqi and leader Abdul Abbas.

Based on the national conciliation document and in light of the letter of commissioning, the national unity government will work at all levels in a manner that achieves the higher interests of the Palestinian people in the following manner:
First: at the political level

1. The government affirms that the key to security and stability in the region depends on ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and recognizing the right to self determination of the Palestinian people; the government will work with the international community for the sake of ending the occupation and regaining the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people so that we can build a solid basis for peace, security and prosperity in the region.
2. The government shall abide to protect the higher national interests of the Palestinian people and protect their rights and preserve and develop their accomplishments and work on achieving their national goals as ratified by the resolutions of the PNC meetings and the Articles of the Basic Law and the national conciliation document and the resolutions of the Arab summits and based on this, the government shall respect the international legitimacy resolutions and the agreements that were signed by the PLO.
3. The government shall abide by rejecting the so called state with temporary borders because this idea is based on taking away from the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.
4. To cling to the right of the Palestinian refugees and right of return to their lands and properties.
5. To work diligently for the sake of liberating the heroic prisoners from the Israeli occupation prisons.
6. To confront the measures of the occupation on the ground in terms of the assassinations, arrests, and incursions. The government shall grant special importance to the city of Jerusalem to confront the Israeli policies pertaining to the people, lands and holy sites of Jerusalem.

7- To consolidate the relations with the Arab and Islamic countries and open up and cooperate with the regional and international surrounding on the basis of mutual respect.

Second: at the level of the occupation

1. The government affirms that peace and stability in the region depends on ending all forms of occupation of the Palestinian territories and removing the apartheid wall and settlements and halt of the Judaization of Jerusalem and policies of annexation and restore the rights to their owners.
2. The government affirms that resistance is a legitimate right of the Palestinian people as granted by the international norms and charters; our Palestinian people have the right to defend themselves in face of any Israeli aggression and believes that halting resistance depends on ending the occupation and achieving freedom, return and independence.
3. Despite this, the government, through national conciliation, will work on consolidating the calm and expanding it to become a comprehensive reciprocal truce happening at the same time between both sides and this should be in return for Israel halting its occupation measures on the ground in terms of assassinations, arrests, incursions and home demolition and leveling of lands and the digging works in Jerusalem and it should work on removing the check[points and reopening the crossings and lifting all the restrictions on movement and the release of prisoners.
4. The government affirms what came in the national conciliation document on the issue of the administration of the negotiations which is the jurisdiction of the PLO and the President of the PNA on the basis of clinging to the Palestinian national goals and towards achieving these goals, so that any offer on any final agreement should be presented to the new Palestinian National Council for ratification or to hold a general referendum to have the Palestinian people inside and abroad and to have a law that organizes this referendum.
5. The government shall support the exerted efforts and shall encourage the relevant parties to accelerate and end the case of the Israeli soldier in the context of an honorable prisoners exchange deal.

Third: at the security level

The national unity government realizes the internal difficult conditions and believes that its top priority at the coming phase is to control the current security conditions

and in order to achieve this, the government shall depend in its program on the following:

1. to form a higher national security council that represents the terms of reference to all security services and the framework that organizes their work and define their policies, and request from the PLC to finalize the law pertaining to the national security higher council.
2. to structure the security services and build them on professional basis and work to provide their needs and reduce the partisan considerations and move them away from political polarizations and conflicts and consolidate in them the loyalty to the homeland and to have them abide by executing the decisions of their political leadership and to make sure that the personnel working in these services commit themselves to the tasks commissioned to them.
3. To work on activating the laws that have been ratified by the PLC with regards to the security institution.
4. to set up a comprehensive security plan to end all forms of chaos and security chaos and aggressions and protect and prevent any bloodshed and honor of families and funds and public and private properties and control the weapons and provide security to the citizen and work on ending the oppression inflicted on the people through the rule of the law and support the police to perform its duties in the best manner.

Fourth: at the legal level

1. The government shall work in full cooperation with the judicial authority to secure the reform and activation and protection of the judicial apparatus with all its institutions in a manner that can enable it to perform its duties in the context of achieving justice and fighting corruption and abiding by the rule of the law and implement the law with transparency and integrity on everybody without any interference from any party.
2. The government affirms that it work according to the Basic Law which organizes the relations between the three authorities on the basis of separating between the authorities and respect the authorities granted to the Presidency and to the government according to the law and order.
3. The government shall assist Mr. President in performing his various duties and will make sure to cooperate fully with the Presidency institution and the constitutional institutions and work with the PLC and the juridical authorities towards developing the Palestinian political system on the basis of having a unified strong national authority.

Fifth: At the level of the Palestinian values system

1. The eleventh government shall abide by consolidating national unity and protect social peace and consolidate the values of mutual respect and adoption of the language of dialogue and end all forms of tension and consolidate the culture of tolerance and protection of the Palestinian blood and ban internal fighting.
2. The government affirms the unity of the Palestinian people inside and abroad and shall work to have the participation of the Palestinian people abroad in all matters pertaining to the Palestinian affairs.
3. The government shall seek to consolidate national conciliation and towards achieving comprehensive national conciliation through forming a higher national commission under the sponsorship of the presidency and the government to be formed from the PLC and the factions and the well known figures and legal experts and scholars. The aim of this commission is to end the blood problems between the factions and families and assess the damage caused to the properties and institutions and work on solving these problems.
4. The government shall work on reinforcing the principle of citizenship through equality in rights and duties and equal opportunities and consolidate social justice in appointments and recruitments in the various ministries and institutions and end all forms of political favoritism in civil and security recruitments.
5. The government affirms its respect to the principle of political pluralism and protection of public freedoms and reinforce the values of Shura and democracy and protect the human rights and consolidate the principle of justice and equality and protect the free press and freedom of expression and abide by peaceful transfer of power and authorities and conclude the elections at the local councils within the next six months God willing.

6. The government shall abide by providing a dignified life to the Palestinian citizen and provide the requirements of life and social welfare and meet the health needs and develop the health facilities and expand health insurance and improve the situation of the hospitals and clinics and work on tackling the phenomena of poverty and unemployment through providing job opportunities and development projects and social securities and the social welfare program; the government shall grant special care to the education and higher education and shall encourage scientific research and provide its needs.
7. To care for the sectors of laborers, farmers, fishermen and the sectors of youths and women so that women can assume the status they deserve based on their sacrifices and to secure to them participation in the decision making process and to contribute in the building process in all institutions and ministries and at the various fields.

Sixth: the economic situation

1. The government shall work on ending the siege imposed on our Palestinian people through the programs and relations and to activate the regional and international frameworks to alleviate the suffering of our Palestinian people.
2. The government shall give priority to upgrade and advance the national economy and encourage the economic and trade sectors with the Arab and Islamic world and encourage economic and trade relations with the European Union and the rest of the world.
3. to move to protect the consumer and encourage the private sector and provide the proper climate for its activities and lay down the sound rules for government work and its official institutions and the institutions of the private sector and end monopoly. The government shall work on providing the proper climate and protection and stability of investment projects.
4. The government shall work on respecting the principles of free economy in a manner that meets with our values and norms and in a manner that serves the Palestinian development and protect the private sector and encourage investment and fight unemployment and poverty and reinforce the productive economic sectors and reconstruct the infrastructure and develop the industrial zone and the housing and technology sectors.

Seventh: the field of reform

1. The government which adopts the reform strategy affirms to your respectful council and to the people who granted us their esteemed confidence that we will remain faithful and the citizen shall feel this in the work of the government – God willing – through real achievements on the ground in the areas of administrative and financial reforms and cooperate with the PLC on issuing the laws that reinforce reform and that fights corruption and to look into the structures and methods of work in a manner that guarantees efficacy of work and performance in the ministries and their abidance by the law.
2. The government shall work on meeting the urgent needs of the citizen in the various fields through planning and initiatives and in defining the priorities of spending and rationalize spending and in launching initiatives and innovative ideas and maintain the highest degrees of credibility and transparency.
3. within the context of reform, the government shall seek to fight corruption and reinforce the values of integrity and transparency and refrain from abusing public funds and we will give the matter of administrative development a social dimension and societal culture that establishes for a new concept and formulate a Palestinian societal strategy for administrative development and to develop a sound working mechanism based on the principles of modern administration which can assist in implementing this strategy according to the requirements and needs of the Palestinian society.

Eighth: International relations

At the time when our government stresses on its Arab and Islamic depth, it shall work on establishing sound and solid relations with the various world countries and with the international institutions, including the UN and the Security Council and the international regional organizations in a manner that assists reinforcing world peace and stability. The European Union has offered lots of assistance to our Palestinian people and supported our people's right in freedom and independence and the EU has had serious standpoints in launching criticism to the Israeli occupation policies; therefore, we are interested in solid ties with the EU and we expect from it a larger

role in exerting pressure on the occupation authorities to respect the human rights as stipulated by the international charters to withdraw its troops from the occupied Palestinian Territories and halt all and repeated aggressions against our people. The government seeks to develop the relations with the countries with permanent membership in the Security Council, mainly Russia and China and Japan and the African and Asian countries in a manner that secures the just rights of our people and at the same time, the government calls on the United States Administration to reconsider its unjust positions towards the Palestinian cause and calls on the need to respect the option of the Palestinian people as realized and translated in the national unity government.

[77] The State of Israel Policy Towards the Palestinian Government Approved ON, 18.03.2007:

1. In light of the fact that the new Palestinian Government, based on the platform formulated and approved by it, does not accept the principles of the international community: recognition of Israel's right to exist, elimination of terror and the dismantling of terrorist infrastructure, and recognition of the agreements signed with Israel including the Roadmap. Israel will not be able to work with the Government or any of its ministers.
2. Israel will continue to work with Mahmoud Abbas in order to advance issues of security and issues pertaining to improving the quality of living of the Palestinian population.
3. The Palestinian Government's platform, which include, inter alia, the use of terror as a legitimate right, the acceptance of previous agreements with Israel based only in accordance with Palestinian interests, as well as limitations the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority took upon himself, including bringing any agreement with Israel to the authorization of the new Palestinian National Council and the Palestinian Diaspora, gives, in essence, a veto right to Hamas and other terrorist organizations over any agreement that would be reached with Israel, and limits the possibilities and range of topics which Israel can discuss with the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority.
4. Israel will continue to demand that the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority implement his obligations: to bring about the unconditional release of the abducted soldier Gilad Shalit to stop Kassam missile attacks to dismantle the terrorist organizations and their infrastructure in the Palestinian Authority and to fully implement the first stage of the Roadmap.
5. Israel expects the international community to maintain the policy it has taken over the past year of isolating the Palestinian Government, until it recognizes the three principles of the Quartet.
6. Israel has not changed its position; Israel is for peace with the Palestinians according to the Roadmap. Israel stands for a two state solution. Israel is ready to initiate contacts with any government in the Palestinian Authority, whatever the composition of it may be, which fulfills the conditions of the international community, and will be willing to discuss all issues with it.

[78] Dokumentation des „Temporary International Mechanism for the Assistance of the Palestinian People", Bezug nehmend auf die Erklärung des Nahost-Quartetts vom 09.05.2006, in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente" dieser Homepage.

[79] Secretary Condoleezza Rice, Washington, DC, 19.03.2007:
Steinmeier (via interpreter): ... Condoleezza Rice pointed to the fact that now that a national unity government has been formed by the Palestinians we have entered a stage where we are very carefully watching the declarations, the statements made by that new government, but also the first decisions and actions to be taken by that new government. And of course this is going to have an influence on the readiness of the Europeans to cooperate with that government. It's clear, ladies and gentlemen, that we stand by what we've said in the past, in the framework of the Quartet, we stand by the expectations that we've expressed there. And the Quartet has not really invented these matters on its own, but it's part and parcel of the roadmap process. ...
Ferrero-Waldner: ...I think on Israel-Palestine, it is very important that in this delicate moment, we at least can go on with our temporary international mechanism

and that we prolong this for another three months in order to see that the Palestinian people will not suffer in this period where we have to, of course, make a judgment on the national unity government…
Question: First, to the Higher Representative. Mr. Solana, to give this new Palestinian government the best chance of success, do you think it's now time to lift the international aid embargo and if not, do you have a timeline for when you would like to see that happen? And to Secretary Rice, the coalition government platform includes a reference to the right of resistance. Do you read that as a code for terrorism and if so why?
Solana: Should I start? As you know, we have been following from the very beginning the formation of this government and we have made already several statements in different meetings of the Quartet. We want to praise, once again, the efforts of the King Abdullah and the Saudis for mobilizing this effort. We hope very much that when the government is established and is already there that it will contribute no doubt first to the peace among the Palestinians, but we have to say also that the government does not comply fully with the principle that the Quartet had so many times said publicly they would like to have in this government. In any case, we expect very much that this government in the process will be taking the positions of the Quartet as much as possible and at the end take completely and they will have a total normalization of the relation with the government. And I think not only that, we will have the possibility of moving in the peace process at much faster rhythm. We'd like to say that once again that we would like to continue working with the Palestinian people. We are not going to let the Palestinian people down and we hope very much to follow in great detail the facts – the deeds – that this government behaves is much more important what they do than what they say at this point in time. We are going to follow that. In any case, we will never let the Palestinian people down.
Rice: Well, I would put the question to the Palestinian government because after all for a generation now – well, a political generation, the Palestinian leadership has adhered to the principles that would undergird a two-state solution, including renunciation of violence and the willingness to live side by side with Israel. It's in the roadmap. It is the foundation really of Oslo. And so I'm not going to try to interpret what the right of resistance means, but I'll tell you, it doesn't sound very good to me, when one talks about all forms of resistance. So I would put the question to the Palestinian government and to its prime minister: Do you mean the right of resistance by violence and let's get an answer. ...
Question: (Inaudible) for Secretary Rice and Mr. Solana, President Abbas has publicly and repeatedly appealed to the Quartet to lift its aid embargo. Do you not worry that if you refuse or if this drags on, that his inability to deliver despite his close relationship with the United States and the European Union will undermine his standing and that of other moderates among the Palestinian people?
Rice: Well, let me start by repeating something that Benita said and that Javier said as well. We are going to continue to help the Palestinian people. We've been helping through humanitarian assistance. We have the temporary international mechanism. I think if you look at the numbers, you'll see that actually, the amount of assistance going into the Palestinian people has – it's gone up over the last year. And so we're going to continue to help the Palestinian people and we're going to continue to deal with Abu Mazen. I'm going to the region at the end of the week. I intend to see him, to talk with him, and to continue to try to work on bettering the lives of the Palestinian people as well as trying to push forward on a political horizon so that the Palestinian people can see the pathway to the establishment of a Palestinian state. Now the Quartet principles are there not to be obstructionists, but because they are the foundational principles for peace. You cannot have a peace agreement or a peace process when one party does not recognize the right of the other party to exist or will not renounce violence. And that's why there has been so much concern in the international community that any government of the Palestinian people would reflect those principles, because those principles are critical to getting to a two-state solution. And I should add they have been at the foundation of where Palestinian leadership has been since Oslo. And so we will continue to insist that those principles be respected. We're going to continue to help the Palestinian people. And we're going to continue to deal with Abu Mazen. And I

think that that is the right place to be so that Palestinians understand what is before them in order to gain full acceptance for their government.
Solana: Well, I have a little to add – to say once again that the Palestinian people will never be let down by us and for the European Union. As has been said, we have been increasing our contribution the last three years. We will continue in the future. And we see the government people that we trust and we know well, that we have been working with them. And as I said before, we hope very much that this will be a process that will lead to the acceptance of all the principle, because it would be beneficial for them, beneficial for us, for the peace process. As we have said many, many times, we will continue, the Quartet will continue to engage in trying to define the political horizon so that the peace process can move forward.
(Inaudible.) ...

[80] Joharah Baker: Farewell Tanya, Palestine has Lost a Friend, in "Media and Information Programme at the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH") 21.03.2007: Most people hope that after they are gone, there will be something, however miniscule, that others will remember them by. Linguist, researcher and Palestinian rights advocate Tanya Reinhart far surpassed this goal, because for many, the Palestinians in particular, she has left behind a legacy larger than life. She will never be forgotten.
Tanya Reinhart passed away in New York City on March 17. Born an Israeli citizen who lived most of her life in Israel, Reinhart lived her final days in the United States, not by chance but by meticulous design. After years of exposing Israel's policies against the Palestinians in her articles, lectures and two major books, Reinhart became one of the precious few in this world who truly practices what she preaches. Feeling she could no longer live in the place she called home because of the injustices it perpetrated against another nation, Reinhart made the painful decision in 2006 to leave the prestigious position of emeritus professor at Tel Aviv University, and to leave her home, forever.
It was not only this act of courage that made this woman so remarkable. It was the fact that, as an Israeli speaking out against the atrocities of her own people, Reinhart knowingly placed herself in a constant line of fire. It goes without saying that she endured blinding hatred by some of her own countrymen, sentiments that only someone as strong-willed and with such a high moral compass could ever endure.
Primarily a linguist, Reinhart studied with the best, working in close collaboration with famed linguist Noam Chomsky. Of her passing, Chomsky wrote, "She was on the front line of direct resistance to intolerable actions, an organizer and a participant, a stance that one cannot respect too highly. She will be remembered not only as a resolute and honorable defender of the rights of Palestinians, but also as one of those who have struggled to defend the moral integrity of her own Israeli society, and its hope for decent survival,"
In addition to her contributions to the field of linguistics, Reinhart also wrote several articles and two books on the conflict: Israel/Palestine: How to End the War of 1948 (2002), and The Roadmap to Nowhere; Israel/Palestine since 2003 (2006). One of Reinhart's noted positions, which also brought her stinging criticism from many fellow Israelis, was in 2002 when she signed a European petition calling for a moratorium on European support of Israeli academicians in protest of Israel's politics against the Palestinians.
Reinhart wrote tirelessly about Israel's true intentions in the West Bank, about the Israeli war on Lebanon and the so-called Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, insisting that nothing less than a full withdrawal to all Palestinian land occupied in 1967 would be acceptable. However, perhaps one of the "straws that broke the camel's back", which ultimately drove her to leave Israel for good was the construction of the West Bank separation wall. In October, 2006 as the wall's construction continued in full force, Reinhart said the wall was the "first attempt in history to imprison a nation with a wall that cut off villages from their farmlands." Two months later, she moved to New York permanently.
For the Palestinians, Tanya Reinhart will be sorely missed. Not only was she a staunch advocator of Palestinian rights but she was an Israeli, which made her testimony that much stronger.

Reinhart dedicated her life to dispelling fallacies and exposing Israel's measures at a time when so much of the world has fallen into the black hole of blind loyalty to Israel. "Palestinians should not have to pay the price for the Holocaust," she once said. The fact that she was an Israeli Jew gave such a powerful and true statement exponential proportions.
In her life, Reinhart embodied what it meant to truly fight what you believe in. In death, she has left behind some valuable lessons for both Palestinians and Israelis. To the Palestinians, she has shown us not to compromise on our principles, what we believe is right, just and true. Reinhart sacrificed her home, perhaps friends and family and put her reputation on the line in order to follow her passion, to enlighten the world about what she believes.
To the Israelis, Reinhart has left behind an even more valuable lesson, which could be applied to all nations and peoples. It is not enough to know that your country is doing wrong. As Reinhart painstakingly espoused throughout her life, when injustices are perpetrated by your government and army, it is your duty, your responsibility as a citizen, to do something about it. She believed the change must come from within Israeli society, not only to do justice to the Palestinians but for Israel's own moral salvation.
Reinhart's passing is a loss for us all, Palestinians and Israelis alike. Although her time on this earth may have been less than expected, it is our duty now not to let her message perish. For the Palestinians, she was a comrade-in-arms, so to speak, waging our war for justice, independence and a dignified life, right alongside us. It is our hope that the inner strength Reinhart possessed and portrayed so fiercely will emanate throughout her own society, touching the consciousnesses of those Israelis who know in their hearts and minds that something must be done. Ultimately, Reinhart's message was one of justice, human rights, and above all peace. This is how she should be remembered.

[81] Volltext unter www.nybooks.com/articles/20030,

[82] Remarks of Secretary Condoleezza Rice with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Washington, DC, 14.03.2007:
SECRETARY RICE: Buenos tardes – oh, wrong place. I'm just back from Latin America, so I was delighted to come and to visit for just a brief time with the Foreign Minister of Israel, Tzipi Livni. We've had a chance to discuss a few issues concerning the Middle East and to talk about preparation for my trip to the Middle East at the end of next week. You're welcome here always, Tzipi.
FOREIGN MINISTER LIVNI: Thank you.
SECRETARY RICE: It's good to see you again and why don't you say a few words and then we'll take a question from each side.
FOREIGN MINISTER LIVNI: Okay, yeah, thank you. Like always, never a dull moment in the Middle East. We are facing new challenges, some old challenges, but I believe that we are facing some threats that are also windows of opportunity. And this was an opportunity for me before, because this is the end of my trip to the United States, I'm going back home and will be seeing you in Israel in ten days from now. And we discussed, of course, all the issues, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the situation in Lebanon, and to be continued.
SECRETARY RICE: To be continued – (laughter) – right. Thank you very much.
QUESTION: Madame Secretary, the Saudi peace initiative has attracted some positive comments in Israel (inaudible) Foreign Minister Livni. Do you see any particular interest now in seeing this revised and do you see any reason why the Arabs might modify it, for example, on (inaudible) borders in a way that might be more powerful to the Government of Israel? And if you could say a couple words on President Bashir's latest letter? Andrew Natsios says that it brings you closer to possible (inaudible) sanctions on corporations (inaudible) dollars in Sudan. Are you any closer to sanctions given Sudanese intransigence?
SECRETARY RICE: … In terms of the Arab initiative, I hope that this speaks to the clear need for an Israeli-Arab reconciliation to accompany the Israeli-Palestinian – the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I don't want to speak to the specifics of the initiative because obviously, it's an initiative by the Arabs. We think – a very good thing that this initiative was put forward. We have to remember that it started as the Crown Prince initiative when Saudi now-King Abdullah put forward this idea.

And obviously, the Israelis would have their own ideas about how an Israeli-Arab reconciliation could take place. But I always think that it's a favorable matter when people are talking about resolution of longstanding conflicts. And I just want to emphasize, we believe very strongly that as we are working to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict we need also to work toward Israeli-Arab reconciliation.
QUESTION: Madame Secretary, I would like to follow up on this question. Did you express any desire to Arab moderate leaders that they will amend the plan in a way that will be more acceptable to the Israeli Government, especially of the refugee question?
SECRETARY RICE: Well, the Arab initiative is not a negotiating document. It is a document that sets forward a position. And as I said, I think very favorably about the idea that the Arab League starting as the Crown Prince initiative would, as a whole, set forward a position on which perhaps reconciliation could take place between Israel and the Arab states. But obviously, it is not a negotiating position and I am sure that Israel would have its own views of how that reconciliation could take place. So I have not talked to people about modification. I think it's a favorable thing that they are putting forward something, but it's – again, it's not a negotiating position as I understand it, but rather a framework, a vision for how Israel and the Arabs might reconcile.
QUESTION: Thank you.
SECRETARY RICE: Do you wish to say anything?
FOREIGN MINISTER LIVNI: Oh, yes. (Laughter.)
SECRETARY RICE: You've been talking about this for a week while I've been in Latin America.
FOREIGN MINISTER LIVNI: No – I mean, I believe that there's a need for an historical reconciliation between Israel and the Arab world. And when the Saudi initiative was at first, of course, a Saudi initiative – it was first, I think, something that was published in The New York Times by Tom Friedman and it was very positive because it was based on the idea of two-state solution when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a historical reconciliation and normalization between the Arab world and Israel. But then in Beirut they added – the Arab League added articles which refers to the refugee issue, which I believe is against the concept of two-state solution in which Israel is only for the Jewish people and Palestine is and should be the answer to the Palestinians. So – but in order to send a clear message also to the Arab world, we said that some parts of this initiative are, of course, positive, talking about reconciliation, normalization and such. And the Arabs also – those parts referring to the refugees as we see it are against the concept of the two-state solution. But maybe you would like to take this opportunity – as I said before, I would like to see Arab – pragmatic Arab leaders normalize their relations with Israel without waiting for the peace between Israel and the Palestinians to be completed. But maybe if – they will take these kinds of steps that can help the moderates in the Palestinian Authority to take other steps in order to achieve peace. So this is something that we are waiting for.
SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much.
FOREIGN MINISTER LIVNI: Thanks.

[83] Danny Rubinstein: Losing Jerusalem, in “Haaretz”-online 14.03.2007:
If we examine the headlines in the Palestinian media in recent years, there is hardly any doubt that Jerusalem is the key issue on the agenda. Sometimes there's talk of restrictions on Muslims worshiping at the Al-Aqsa Mosque; sometimes there's talk of the purchase of more Arab houses by associations of religious settlers. And at the end of last week there were more reports of Muslim protests against the work at the Mugrabi Bridge, and violent demonstrations at the Qalandiya checkpoint in northern Jerusalem as well as at the crossing point to Bethlehem in the south. Newspaper photos showed agile young men climbing the ("racist," in the Palestinian version) separation wall and flying a Palestinian flag on it.
From the Palestinian perspective, it would appear, the main problem is not recognition of Israel, the Jewish settlements in the West Bank, the violence and the terror or even the problem of the refugees and the right of return. The problem is Jerusalem. Just as the State of Israel would not be able to exist if the right of the 1948 refugees to return were to be recognized, it can be said that a Palestinian state could not exist without East Jerusalem as its capital.

It is in this context that the protest to the Israeli work at the Mugrabi Gate – both by Muslims in general and the Palestinians in particular – must be viewed. It is true that this work does not involve the Al-Aqsa compound itself, that the Israeli plans do not endanger anything sacred to Islam and that these demonstrations exploit the sensitivity surrounding religious issues to launch another attack on the Israeli government. This was the case in the Western Wall tunnel affair in 1996 and when Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount in September 2000, and this was the case in a long series of other incidents in which Israel disrupted the status quo in Jerusalem.
Every action that Israeli spokesmen define as a measure of strengthening the Israeli hold in the capital of Israel is defined in Palestinian and Arab terms as a continuation of the efforts to Judaize Jerusalem.
The Palestinians have reason to be sensitive about Jerusalem, because they are losing it. Work toward the completion of the separation fences and the walls around East Jerusalem is nearly finished. The reason for the separation is security. And while Israel is claiming that this is not a political border, the crossing arrangements at the walls are looking more and more like border crossing points between countries. At Betunia and Qalandiya to the north, at Hizma and the Mount of Olives in the east, and at Rachel's Tomb in the south, border control installations have transformed primitive roadblocks into modern terminals.
The Palestinian protests on the Jerusalem issue have not stopped, but from Israel's perspective they have become tolerable. It is possible, with great caution, to say that there are signs of Israeli-Jordanian cooperation on Jerusalem. In the peace agreement between the two countries, Israel promised to give Jordan priority in guarding the city's Islamic holy sites, and this agreement has been kept. The governments of Israel and Jordan are careful not to give positions of power to the Palestinian Authority in the control apparatus at Al-Aqsa, and are jointly working to undermine the status of the head of the Islamic Movement in Israel, Sheikh Ra'ad Salah, who is trying to become the patron of Al-Aqsa.
Can Israel's reinforced grip on East Jerusalem advance the peace process? The answer is no. Without East Jerusalem, a Palestinian state will not arise and the waning dream of "two states for two peoples" will come to an end.

[84] Israel’s existence is not in question, in „Haaretz“-online 13.03.2007:
"Defending Israel's right to exist will continue to stand at the center of German foreign policy," declared German Chancellor Angela Merkel, at the opening of the "Europe-Israel Dialogue" conference held during the weekend in Berlin, adding that she was sorry she had to repeat this over and over. Former foreign minister of Germany, Joschka Fischer, expressed his revulsion at the comments made by German bishops, who compared the Warsaw Ghetto to what is taking place in the occupied territories.
The erosion of Israel's legitimacy as a Jewish state is particularly difficult for supporters of peace and democracy in Israel, who recognize its own dubious contribution to the attitude toward Israel.
All Israeli governments have missed – and continue to miss – opportunities to reconcile with neighboring states, have broadened settlement in the territories and have entrenched a destructive rule of occupation, oppressive and corrupting. Since 1967, under government auspices, a small and unruly group has assumed a belligerent monopoly on the Land of Israel and on Jewish identity. The liberal Zionism of Herzl was booted outside the fence and replaced by the messianic, separatist, anti-humanistic Judaism of muscle.
Through this dialogue the real reason for the establishment of the State of Israel, whose powerful expression echoes in the Declaration of Independence, was forgotten: the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people and its shaping into a member of equal rights and obligations in the family of modern nations. Instead, Israel has opted to make use of the Holocaust as the sole justification for its existence and has bequeathed generations of youth born in Israel a mix of blaming the entire world and hating the "gentiles." Israel is of course not to blame for everything. Its neighbors contributed more than once to the deepening of the conflict, and even now its leaders are dragging them toward an impasse.
The statements heard in Europe, stemming from the academia and extreme left there, are not legitimate criticisms of Israel's policies, but efforts to undermine, on

principle, its right to exist as a Jewish state. Behind the simple question, "Does Israel have a right to exist" (as a Guardian editorial read three years ago), hides a definitive stance, which regards Israel as a passing colonial phenomenon and the Jewish people as an ethnic-religious group different from any other people and all other nation-states. However peripheral and radical this tendency may be, it has successfully influenced many people. A familiar stench, hundreds of years old, rises from it, even when it is framed in contemporary terminology.
It is good to witness enlightened liberals like Merkel and Fischer, and many others, rejecting this tendency completely. Israel's policies are worthy of severe condemnation; but its right to exist is absolute.

[85] Address by Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni's to the AIPAC Conference in Washington D.C., 12 March 2007:
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,
It is a great honor for me to be here today. I believe that we are defined – as individuals, as leaders and as nations – by our values and by the choices we make to defend them.
The American-Israeli strategic alliance is a partnership built on common values and not just common interests. In a world where so much is based on narrow interest, an alliance that is founded on shared ideals is unique. This alliance transcends politics.
Here, in the U.S., it enjoys bipartisan support. And in Israel – where we love to argue about almost everything – I can assure you that on the American-Israeli relationship you will hear only one voice.
We, the people of Israel, cherish this friendship. Our governments are partners; our peoples are friends – in good times and in bad. We must never take this for granted and – because of that – we will never take AIPAC for granted. Let me say loudly and clearly on behalf of the government and people of Israel: Thank you, AIPAC.
The U.S.-Israel relationship is of utmost importance, especially now. We are in the midst of a struggle for the future of the free world. The outcome of this struggle will shape this century and the kind of world we – Americans and Israelis – pass on to our children. The cost has already been painful and our hearts go out to those families who lost their loved ones in this struggle.
Dear Friends,
There are moments in history where the threats are clear and prevention is possible, but only if we work together. In order to confront threats, we must first identify and understand them. Our world is changing and being divided between moderates and extremists.
Extremist forces seek to transform national conflicts, which are resolvable, into an endless religious war. The extremists are not fighting for their own rights – they are fighting to deprive others of their rights. The extremists use mass media, like Al Jazeera and the Internet, not to promote co-existence but to spread hate. The extremists want to exploit our values – our desire to resolve conflicts peacefully and our tolerance for others.
The Middle East is also changing. Yes, there are threats. We can see the extremists headed by Iran, with its proxy Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian Authority. But there are also new opportunities. We can see the old divisions of the Middle East being replaced. Israelis, moderate Palestinians, and pragmatic Arab and Muslim leaders are moving into the same camp – sharing the same interests for a peaceful and stable Middle East. We need a dual strategy that empowers the moderates while, at the same time, weakening the extremists.
Ladies and gentlemen,
To address extremism is to address Iran. This is a regime which calls for the destruction of a State, a member of the United Nations, Israel – my home. This alone should deny it a place in the community of nations. It is a regime which denies the Holocaust, while threatening the world with a new one. It is a regime driven by a radical religious ideology with the goal of dominating the region, exporting terror, and preventing peace.
The Iranian threat is clear not just to Israel and the Western world. Many Arab and Gulf States feel it too. They also cannot afford a nuclear Iran and, believe me, love for Israel has nothing to do with it.

They know, as we do, that even if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict magically disappeared, Iran's radical ideology would remain. And they know, as we do, that there is no path to a stable world, or a peaceful Middle East, that does not involve addressing this threat. The international community must not close its eyes. It must defeat this danger not for Israel's sake, but for its own – for the sake of its own security and for the sake of the values it claims to hold dear. We know that there is much more that needs to be done and time is of the essence.
The initial sanctions on Tehran have had an impact and, as part of our collective effort, they must be strengthened and expanded without delay. And to those States, who know the threat, but still hesitate because of narrow economic or political interests let me say this: History will remember. The free world is being watched.
The Middle East is a tough neighborhood. And when there is a bully in this neighborhood there are only two choices, to beat it or to join it.
If States in the region feel that the world will not stop Iran, they may feel the need to appease it. We live in a region where images matter, and where the perception of weakness can have far-reaching consequences. If we appease the extremists – if they feel that we are backing down – they will sense victory and become more dangerous not only to the region, but to the world. This applies to the decisions made on Iran, it is true for Iraq; and it is true across the Middle East. And it is why it is so important for the international community, with American leadership, to project strength, to demonstrate absolute determination in achieving its objectives and absolute commitment to its values.
The international community is also being tested in Lebanon. The goals are clear: to establish an independent Lebanon, which exercises sovereignty over its territory, dismantles militias and enjoys peaceful relations with its neighbors. But Syria, Iran and Hezbollah are determined to prevent this.
Security Council resolutions are clear on the actions that need to be taken. The international forces in Lebanon have brought changes on the ground – but other parts of these resolutions must be implemented fully. The immediate task is to enforce the arms embargo and prevent the ongoing efforts of Syria and Iran to rearm Hezbollah. These illegal weapons destabilize Lebanon, endanger UNIFIL, and threaten Israel. They must not and will not be tolerated.
Most painful for every Israeli is that the hostages Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser remain in captivity. Israel is one family. Eldad and Udi are our sons, and we will do everything, but everything, in our power to bring them home. Our enemies see this desire as our weakness. They are wrong. It is our greatest strength.
Dear Friends,
When it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, our vision for peace is drawn from the ultimate goal of Israel, the reason for its existence – to be a Jewish and democratic State, secure in our ancient homeland.
We want to live in peace.
We have no desire to control Palestinian lives.
We deserve security.
Our children deserve a future, free of hate and full of hope.
Based on these core principles, the vision of peace is clear.
Two States, two homelands, for two peoples – Israel, homeland for the Jewish people wherever they may be. And Palestine, the homeland, the national answer for the Palestinian people, wherever they may be, including the refugees. Two States living in peace and security – the meaning of this is also clear. The future State of Palestine cannot be a terror State. And that is why President Bush's vision and the Roadmap insist that the road to statehood goes through the elimination of terrorism. This is not a zero sum-game. This vision is not pro-Israeli or pro-Palestinian. It is pro-peace.
Israel has made its choice. Across Israeli society we have embraced this vision, and accepted the sacrifices that come with it. The disengagement plan proved this. With great pain, we uprooted families from their homes in order to create an opportunity for peace. Sadly, we received terror in return. And yet, we have not stopped hoping that the Palestinians will make their choice for peace.
Unfortunately, in the last elections they chose Hamas, a terrorist organization driven by an extreme religious ideology. Hamas's goal is not to create a Palestinian State, but to destroy the Jewish one.

The international community, through the Quartet, has repeatedly insisted that any Palestinian government must fully commit to three core principles: renunciation of terror, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements. These requirements are not obstacles to peace, but fundamental principles for peace.
I believe in dialogue – but there are some things that are not up for negotiation.
We cannot and we will not negotiate our right to exist. No-one has the right to do so in our name.
We cannot and we will not negotiate about the need to accept former agreements. They are the outcome of tough negotiations and mutual concessions – they are not a menu to choose from.
And, of course, we will never negotiate over terror. Israeli lives are not bargaining chips.
This is the test for the Palestinian government as a whole, regardless of its members. We expect the international community to defend the requirements for peace. We expect it to stand against terror, not compromise with it.
Ladies and Gentleman,
Stagnation is not in our interest and is not our policy. This is the reason that despite our disappointment from the Mecca agreement, we have not closed the door to dialogue with the moderates. Just yesterday, Prime Minister Olmert met with Chairman Abbas. But we must understand that the chance for peace depends on a clear distinction between the moderates and the extremists. Being a moderate is a title that has to be earned. A moderate is someone who is ready to confront terror; someone who believes in the two State vision and accepts its true meaning. Israel remains willing to work with the moderates, if they are willing to empower themselves and distinguish themselves from the enemies of peace. This includes undertaking genuine efforts to release of Gilad Shalit – who is in our prayers every day. It includes bringing an end to daily attacks on Israeli homes and the smuggling of weapons across the Gaza-Egypt border. And it includes preparing the Palestinian people for the compromises and historic reconciliation that any true peace will require from both sides.
Dear Friends,
All of us are eager to see peace in the Middle East. Nobody wants it more than Israel. This is about our lives and the future of our children. Lasting peace is possible if it is built on solid foundations and shared values.
Despite all the challenges, I am optimistic – I can see new opportunities emerging. Moderate and pragmatic leaders are beginning to see Israel not as an enemy of the violent past, but as a partner in a common and peaceful future. The challenge we all face, as leaders in the Middle East, is to say this publicly to our people and to teach it to our children. We are ready to do our part, and we hope our neighbors are ready to do theirs.
And today – from this podium – I call on Arab and Muslim States – those who condition their relations with Israel on the end of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – not to wait any more. You have the power to change reality, and to encourage Palestinians to embrace co-existence. Do not wait for peace to come before you normalize relations with us – normalize now and peace will come.
Ladies and Gentleman,
As we say in Hebrew "Ein li eretz acheret" – we have no other homeland. We also have no other values. For 60 years we have fought for our existence without compromising our principles, our vision, or our dream for peace. We are moderates by definition – we are not threatening to turn into extremists.
I believe in Israel and am proud to represent it.
I am proud of the strength and vitality of our economy.
I believe in the courage and innovation of our people.
And I believe in the U.S.-Israeli partnership and the values on which it is founded.
I know that you feel the same.
And the future depends on us.
Thank you.

[86] Pastor John Hagee: Speech at the AIPAC Policy Conference, 11.03.2007:
Good evening, dear friends of Israel; thank you for the privilege and pleasure of speaking to this distinguished AIPAC gathering. May I begin by thanking Melvin Dow for his friendship and wisdom that have been a guiding light for me personally

and in all our endeavors on behalf of Israel over the years. I also want to thank AIPAC and each of you for being Israel's defender in the halls of the US Congress. You are the finest and most efficient advocacy organization in Washington, DC.
On September 10, 1981 we conducted our First Night to Honor Israel in San Antonio and there are two people with me tonight that made that First Night to Honor Israel possible – my wife Diana, the love of my life and Rabbi Aryeh Sheinberg without whose courage there would never have been the First Night to Honor Israel nor the birth of Christians United for Israel. There to my left, would you please stand; I'd like you to be welcomed by this great group of people.
We meet tonight at dangerous and difficult time in world history. To anyone with eyes to see and ears that hear, it is clear that Israel is in the gravest danger she has faced since six Arab armies tried to strangle the Jewish state in the birth canal in 1948. I know that during difficult days such as this when it seems that the whole world is against Israel many in the Jewish community nervously scan the globe searching for friends. You look toward the United Nations which Dore Gold calls The Tower of Babble.
You look at Europe where the ghost of Hitler is again walking across the stage of history. You open your newspapers and read about American universities where Israel is being viciously vilified by students taught by professors whose Middle Eastern chairs are sponsored by Saudi Arabia. You look to America's mainline churches and their initiatives to divest from Israel. You go to the bookstore and see slanderous titles by the former President of the United States [Jimmy Carter] and you feel very much alone.
I came here tonight to speak about Christians United for Israel and millions of evangelicals in America who have a deep-seated faith-based belief to love Israel, to speak up for Israel, to standup for Israel, to pray for Israel and to financially support Israel until Israel achieves a just and lasting peace.
I came here tonight to deliver a message to you from those millions of evangelicals in America and I want to say this as clearly and plainly as I can possibly say it – Israel, you are not alone.
There are millions of evangelical Christians across America who consider the Jewish people the apple of God's eye, who see you as the chosen people, a cherished people and a covenant people with an eternal covenant that will stand forever. Ladies and gentlemen of AIPAC it's a new day in America. The sleeping giant of Christian Zionism has awakened; there are 50 million Christians standing up and applauding the State of Israel.
If a line has to be drawn, draw the line around both Christians and Jews; we are united; we are indivisible; we are bound together by the Torah – the roots of Christianity are Jewish. We are spiritual brothers and what we have in common is far greater than the things we've allowed to separate us over the years.
As you know, Iran poses a threat to the State of Israel that promises nothing less than a nuclear holocaust. I have been saying on national television, in churches and auditoriums across America, it is 1938; Iran is Germany and Ahmadinejad is the new Hitler. Ladies and gentlemen we must stop Iran's nuclear threat and stop it now and stand boldly with Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East. The only way to win a nuclear war is to make certain it never starts. Iran's President has not limited his maniacal threats to Israel. He has also asked his fellow Iranians to imagine a world without America. This is a clear threat to destroy the United States of America. I have something to say to Iran's President or Iran: Mr. Ahmadinejad, don't threaten America.
Do not threaten Israel by saying they will pass away in a sudden storm. In the Bible when Pharaoh threatened the Jewish people of Egypt he became fish food in the Red Sea. When Haman threatened the Jews in Persia in modern-day Iran he and his sons hung from the gallows that he built for the Jews. Mr. Ahmadinejad's threats against Israel have a way of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy; you may be well speaking about your own demise when you talk about passing away with a sudden storm, but you are not talking about Israel's future.
The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is watching you. King David wrote that thou that keepeth Israel neither slumber nor sleeps. The Christians of America are not going to sit by in silence this time and watch you plod and plan a nuclear holocaust. There will never be another holocaust – not on our watch and never again.

Beyond that threat from Iran there's another more subtle threat that concerns me. I am concerned that in the coming months yet another attempt will be made to parcel out parts of Israel in a futile effort to appease Israel's enemies in the Middle East. I believe that misguided souls in Europe, I believe that the misguided souls in the political brothel that is now the United Nations and sadly – and sadly even our own State Department will try once again to turn Israel into crocodile food. Winston Churchill said and I quote: An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile in the futile hope that it will eat him last – end of quote. In 1938 Czechoslovakia – Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland was turned into crocodile food for Nazi Germany. The Nazi beast smelled the weakness in the appeasers, ate the food and marched and devoured most of Europe and systematically slaughtered 6,000,000 Jewish people.

We are again hearing calls to appease the enemies of Israel.

Once again those who would appease seek to do so at the expense of Israel. They tell us that if we want the Sunnis and the Shiites to stop massacring each other in Iraq then Israel must give up land. They tell us that if we want the Syrians to stop murdering the leaders in Lebanon, then Israel must give up land.

They tell us if we want the Saudis to permit women to drive and to vote, Israel must give up land. If we want the sun to rise in the east and set in the west, Israel must give up land. Let me be clear; Israel is not the problem here.

Scapegoating Israel will not solve the problem; the problem is the Arab rejection of Israel's right to exist.

The problem is that Israel has no partner for peace; the problem is radical Islam's blood – blood-thirsty embrace of a theocratic dictatorship that believes they have a mandate from God to kill Christians and Jews. The problem is the failure of the moderates in the Arab and Muslim world to stand up and rein in these Islamic extremists.

If the moderate Arabs believe that murdering Christians and Jews is wrong then standup and say so – this is America. We welcome your participation in free speech, but your silence is deadly. Appeasement is not the answer, my friends. To quote the great evangelical abolitionist William Wilberforce: Appeasement is nothing more than surrender on the installment plan – end of quote. America should not pressure Israel to give up land and America must never pressure Israel to divide the City of Jerusalem.

Dore Gold in his latest book “The Fight for Jerusalem” said and I quote: Turning part or all of Jerusalem to the Palestinians would be tantamount to turning it over to the Taliban – end of quote. I agree. Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the Jewish people now and forever. Jerusalem is united under Jewish control and must always remain under Jewish control.

Why do Christians support Israel? Truth is not what I say it is. Truth is not what you think it is. Truth is what the Torah says it is; there's the Torah way and the wrong way. Genesis 12 and 3 [?] says I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. We believe those blessings are very real and those judgments are very real.

Where are the nations that have persecuted the Jewish people? Where is Pharaoh and his army? Where are the Babylonians? Where are the Greeks? Where is the Ottoman Empire? Where are the Romans? Where is that goose-stepping lunatic Adolf Hitler and his Nazi hoards? All are historic footnotes in the bone yard of human history. Where are – where are – where is Israel? Where are the Jewish people? They're alive and well; they're thriving; they're prospering; they're growing – even on a day of adversity they're still going forward.

Where is Israel? Where are those who are scattered throughout the Diaspora? The mighty right hand of God has gathered them from the nations of the world and Israel was miraculously born [on] May 15, 1948. Israel lives! Shout it from the house top – Israel lives! Let every Islamic terrorist group hear it – Israel lives! Let every tin horn dictator in the Middle East hear it – Israel lives! Let it be heard in the halls of the UN – Israel lives! Let it echo down the marble halls of the Presidential Palace in Iran – Israel lives! Let it ring in the terrorist camps of Osama Bin Laden – Israel lives! Israel lives! Israel lives!

Jews have suffered pogroms and persecution; they have outlasted Pharaoh's slavery and Hitler's final solution and I have no doubt that long after Hamas and Hezbollah have been buried in the bone yard of human history, long after the crisis

with Iran has been resolved, the Flag of Israel will still be flying over the ancient walls of the sacred city and Jerusalem and Israel will be the praise of all the earth. Why do Christians support Israel – because Christians deeply believe we owe a debt of gratitude to the Jewish people; you gave us the word of God, you gave us the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; you gave us the Prophets, Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zachariah, Amos, Josiah, Joel – not a Baptist in the bunch. The first family of Christianity – Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, the Apostles, John [in] the fourth chapter says salvation is of the Jews; that's a New Testament verse. You don't hear many sermons that preached on that but that's a real verse. Salvation is of the Jews; the point is if you take away the Jewish contribution from Christianity there would be no Christianity. Judaism does not need Christianity to explain its existence, but Christianity cannot explain its existence without Judaism. Therefore I have been saying for 26 years over national television, it's time for Christians to stop praising the dead Jews of the past – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – while avoiding the Jews who live across the street. That's anti-Semitism and anti-Semitism is sin and as sin it damns the soul. As Christians tonight on this historic occasion we ask God's forgiveness and yours for every act of anti-Semitism in our past. The crusades, the inquisition, Martin Luther's Concerning the Jews and Their Lies; the final solution of Adolf Hitler carried out by baptized Christians in good-standing with their church; the fact that the Roman Church was silent during these atrocities and did not share – we did not share their theology. They did not share our appreciation for the great contribution the Jewish people have given to humanity and to Christianity. Tonight I humbly ask forgiveness of the Jewish people for every act of anti-Semitism and the deafening silence of Christianity in your greatest hour of need during the Holocaust. We were not there; we cannot change the past, but together we can shape the future. Think of our potential future together; 50,000,000 evangelicals joining in common cause with 5,000,000 Jewish people in America on behalf of Israel is a match made in heaven.
Let the word go forth from Washington, DC tonight. There is a new beginning in America between Christians and Jews. We pledge to God and to the Jewish people to fulfill the words of the Prophet Isaiah; for Zion's sake we will not hold our peace and for Jerusalem's sake we will not rest. You who make mention of the Lord do not keep silent and give the Lord no rest until He makes Jerusalem the praise of all the earth. We have organized Christians United for Israel. We have 13 Regional Directors; we have 40 State Directors; we have 80 City Directors and they're growing. We're organizing Congressional District by Congressional District, so that as body we can standup and speak up for Israel every year in Washington, DC and Congress will know that the matter of Israel is no longer just a Jewish issue; it is a Christian-Jewish issue from this day forward.
In closing – in closing, I believe 2007 is the year of destiny. America and Israel are at war with a common enemy. It is a war of good versus evil. It is a war of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness versus the culture of death. I close with the words of Winston Churchill, who is my favorite statesman of all time. Spoken during the dark days of World War II when Hitler seemed unbeatable and victory seemed impossible, Churchill said: You ask what is our aim; I can answer in one word – it is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of the terror, victory however long and hard the road may be, for without victory there is no survival – end of quote.
Ladies and gentlemen, as Christians and Jews, our aim is victory – victory for Israel and victory in our time. May God bless Israel; God bless America; and God bless each of you.

[87] The Goy Who Cried Wolf – The Israeli lobby gives America's leading Christian right warmonger a warm welcome, 13.03.2007 www.prospects.org:
Delegates at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) Policy Conference were treated to an air-brushed John Hagee last night, primed with his most innocuous talking points and stripped of his most outlandish Armageddon rhetoric. Hagee, the founder of the America's leading Christian Zionist lobby, Christians United for Israel, left his clumsy exegeses of Biblical prophecy back home in San Antonio. He is well-versed in bringing an audience of several thousand people to its feet, and he knew he didn't need his slide show of mushroom clouds and world-ending wars to work this crowd.
Hagee's set-up man was the historian Michael Oren, who recited the history of restorationism, a Protestant movement dating back to the first settlers at Plymouth Rock that

sought to return the Jews to Palestine and create a Jewish state. In Oren's telling, you would have thought that before Mearsheimer, Walt, and Carter came along, Jews and American Christians had spent the last several centuries in an idyllic, carefree frolic together, and that George W. Bush's forebearers were Jew-loving Zionists rather than arms-dealing tycoons so intent on consolidating power that they were willing to transact business with the Nazis. The placement of Oren's speech laid the groundwork for Hagee by insinuating that the war-mongering fundamentalist is nothing more than an innocuous heir to a quintessentially American love-fest between apocalyptic Christians and displaced Jews.

In anticipation of Hagee's appearance at AIPAC's conference, there has been much discussion about whether Hagee is actually an anti-Semite who blames Jews for the Holocaust yet anticipates their conversion at the Second Coming – and another debate over whether it's actually good for Israel or the world's Jews when groups like AIPAC ally themselves with him. But judging from the crowd's reaction, and that of delegates I spoke with afterwards, none of that mattered. Like other Jewish leaders I've talked to about Hagee, the attitude is simply that Israel has very few friends, and it needs all the friends it can get. If Hagee is willing to mobilize hundreds of thousands, perhaps even millions of conservative Christians to the cause, then they're willing to overlook his eagerness for the Second Coming (when we'll all become Christians), because it's just a silly fantasy that won't come to pass, anyway.

Had Hagee come to Washington with his usual spiel, perhaps these delegates would have been mortified to learn that Hagee calls the Jewish holiday of *Rosh Hashanah* "the Prophecy of the Trumpets," and says it represents the regathering of the church in anticipation of the Second Coming. He says the feast of *Sukkot* is significant because it will be the time of the Second Coming, and that the *tallis*, the Jewish prayer shawl, is a clear indication that there will be a Second Coming. You see, says Hagee, Jesus would not have left his *tallis* neatly folded up when he went off to his crucifixion if he didn't have plans to come back.

Perhaps the AIPAC crowd would have dismissed all these strange distortions of their faith as an amusing but largely irrelevant sideshow to their single-minded mission of making more friends. But they never had to confront the issue because Hagee's speech was stripped of the most damning details.

Whether Hagee is good for Israel is beside the point. The real problem is that he represents a catastrophe for the United States and its standing in the world – not because he might love the Jews too much, or might in fact secretly hate them, but because he is leading a growing political movement completely lacking in a substantive understanding of world affairs. At a time when the Middle East faces seemingly intractable conflicts with dire geopolitical consequences, the notion that Hagee – whose status is only elevated by invitations like AIPAC's – is leading a political movement based on nothing more than a supposedly literal reading of his Bible only reinforces the view that the United States is being led by messianic forces at odds with world peace and stability. Young Americans should have a deeper understanding of Middle East politics in order to fully participate in civic discourse as American troops are fighting a seemingly unending war. But Hagee worries not about troop deployments, instead focusing on teaching the Bible in public schools. While religious fundamentalism is causing untold bloodshed around the world, Hagee frets about secularists who are "destroying America."

When he does speak to actual Middle East politics, it's only to encourage the further destabilization of the region. Hagee has been agitating for a war with Iran for well over a year now, certainly not a single-handed effort on his part, nor one for which he would deserve sole blame should it happen. But if it does happen (and some think it already has begun), Hagee most certainly should be blamed for something else: convincing his minions that war is not only palatable, but required by God.

Hagee's speech, laced with charged comparisons of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to men like Pharaoh, Haman, and Hitler, as well as countless Churchillian references, brought the crowd to its feet. "He's A-OK," said one AIPAC delegate who had never heard of Hagee before, adding that he wanted to get one of Hagee's DVDs for his grandchildren to watch. "I *love* him," enthused another delegate, a woman who had already learned of CUFI through conservative talk radio and had donated money to the cause. "Who else cares about Israel?"

[88] Vgl. die Eintragungen vom 16.01., 29.01. und 06.02.2007 in dieser Chronologie.

[89] Vgl. die Eintragung vom 11.12.2006 in dieser Chronologie.

[90] Aluf Benn: Surging toward a comeback (interview with Benjamin Netanyahu), in "Haaretz"-online 09.03.2007:
On Wednesday, a few hours before flying to Washington, Benjamin Netanyahu remembered his job as head of the opposition and rattled off some comments about Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. "We have to hold elections," Netanyahu declared. "The prime minister has lost the public trust."
This was a rare public criticism from the Likud leader, who has been trying to appear statesmanlike over the past few months and generally avoids frontal assaults on the government. He apparently figured it wasn't worth kicking a dead political horse that enjoys negligible support in the polls, and that it's better to keep quiet until the government collapses on its own.
But something has changed over the last few days.
"I'm convinced that the government will not live out its days," Netanyahu said in an interview with Haaretz, in which he accused Olmert of being helpless in the face of the Iranian threat. "The nation is searching for leadership, and if the government doesn't gain its composure, the change will come," he added. "Time will tell whether it happens in a parliamentary or electoral process, but I am convinced that it is not just the will of the opposition, but the will of the nation."
Although it is possible for the government to recover, there's "no sign" of that happening, Netanyahu said. "On the contrary: There is a reverse process of maneuvers, delays, futile exercises and dealing with unimportant and political exercises, rather than with changes that must be initiated in the country."
Netanyahu also identified his political target this week: Kadima's stockpile of MKs and voters. The crowning of the Likud leader as Olmert's successor during the current Knesset will require that at least 11 members of the prime minister's faction return to the Likud. And if the elections are held early – something that Netanyahu doubts will happen – the Likud will need votes that it lost to Kadima and to Yisrael Beiteinu in 2006.
Perhaps because of this, and perhaps due to the upcoming Winograd Commission report on the war in Lebanon and its potential ramifications, Netanyahu is signaling a move to the center, and is making surprisingly optimistic statements about the chances of a political process with the Palestinians.
"I see a unique opportunity for progress in the peace process with moderate Arab partners, for a simple reason: There is identification of a shared threat," he explained. "Even if Iran's nuclear program is stopped, the extremist Islamic threat exists, and that allows for the creation of alliances with various elements in the Arab world as well as in Palestinian society."
And would you agree to withdraw from territories as part of such a peace process?
"If I knew that I had a genuine partner. I have already proved that I am prepared to make certain concessions, not sweeping or unlimited, but I demanded mutuality and as long as I received it, I was able to progress."
Would you accept the Saudi initiative (withdrawal from all territory in exchange for fully normalized ties between Israel and the Arab world, and a "just and agreed-upon" solution to the refugee problem) as the basis for negotiations?
"The Saudi initiative cannot be implemented in terms of its details, but we have to aspire to an arrangement in which it is clear that if Israel is required to make additional concessions, it knows from the start that there will be no more demands and that the conflict is reaching an end. That did not exist in the negotiations that we conducted until now. We have to make an arrangement, get to the end, and then go backward."
Head of the Majlis
Despite the optimistic statements, Netanyahu does not currently see a Palestinian partner for an agreement, and demands that the peace partner will recognize Israel's right to exist. He is also not enthusiastic about the renewal of the Syrian negotiations channel, and says he tends to accept the assessment of Mossad espionage agency head Meir Dagan, that Syria is not heading toward peace. Netanyahu quotes intelligence assessments that the Syrian military-acquisitions budget has increased tenfold. On this matter, his position is no different from Olmert's.

Netanyahu has long been acting like the opposition head of the Majlis, Iran's parliament, rather than that of the Knesset. His public criticism is directed toward Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Netanyahu goes around the world and calls for Ahmadinejad to stand trial for incitement to genocide. His upcoming trip to the United States will also center around the struggle against Iran and its nuclear program. He will speak at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) lobby's annual conference next week, and meet with U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney and the leading candidates for president.

"The Iranian regime is more vulnerable than it seems," said Netanyahu. "It's possible to act against it in a firm and focused way, to destabilize it, or stop the nuclear program, or both. Its major weakness is in the economic sphere."

The idea of imposing a "secondary boycott" on the Iranian economy is at the center of Netanyahu's campaign. It involves convincing the managers of pension funds for civil servants in every state in the United States, which hold assets worth hundreds of billions of dollars, to pull their investments from some 400 companies, from European and other countries, conducting business with Iran. Such a boycott would threaten the Iranian economy and the stability of its government. Netanyahu also wants to send AIPAC activists to governors and state legislatures in a bid to get them to order the pension funds to impose the boycott. This week, he submitted a similar bill in the Knesset, which, if passed, would ban Israeli investment in multinational companies active in Iran.

"All who feared military efforts against Iran should welcome an economic means that can render military activity unnecessary," Netanyahu said.

In his latest travels in Europe, he presented this idea to members of the French National Assembly's foreign affairs committee and to members of the British parliament. He tells doves to support the boycott so as to prevent an attack on Iran; the hawks will support pressure on the Iranians anyway. "It's not certain that the effort will succeed," Netanyahu admitted. "But even if it doesn't, at least public opinion will be prepared for tougher action."

Same 1938 analogy

In a speech before the General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities in Los Angeles in November, Netanyahu made a chilling analogy between present-day Iran and 1938 Germany. Since then, he has continued to draw this analogy. In his talks in Washington next week, he will suggest the establishment of a "coalition against genocide" that would act against the genocide in Darfur – an issue that is important to the Democrats – and against Ahmadinejad, the Holocaust denier who has called for Israel's destruction. The coalition would be "against a genocide that is carried out, that which is denied, and that which is planned," Netanyahu explained.

Is Israel facing a holocaust?

"I think it's possible to stop this holocaust, these threats. The situation is identical to 1938, in that an extreme ideology is present that is arming itself with weapons, with the declared attempt of destroying a significant portion of the Jewish people. The situation is different, in that there is a State of Israel that can and must elicit international pressure, and also because there is [now] a historic perspective. When [U.S. Secretary of State] Condoleezza Rice said that we are not in 1938, she was not referring to a change in the intention to destroy, but to the application of the historic lesson. On the contrary: Let us see the application, but it depends on actions carried out in the exhaustible time [that's left]."

Netanyahu quoted the Mossad chief's assessment that Iran will achieve nuclear capability within about three years. "That's not a lot of time, 1,000 days," the Likud leader said.

Aren't you concerned that your talk of a holocaust will lead to demoralization and will encourage young Israelis to flee just in order to be saved?

"The right thing that generates hope is not repressing the threat, or blurring it and concealing it, but the readiness to face it and to muster the many forces we have, and to lead the world to understand and stand up against it. There is a future, there is the capacity to halt this, to stop Iran and, if necessary, to build a massive deterrence."

Is the Olmert government doing enough?

"Unfortunately not. I would like to see a greater effort, and I said so to the prime minister. An all-out effort, which tries to use all the available tools to generate economic, political and public-relations pressure to isolate Iran, destabilize the

regime or freeze the nuclear program. A master plan is needed, with the direct involvement of the prime minister."
Netanyahu advocates significant investment in development of defense and deterrence methods. When he was prime minister, he increased the budget for that, and today notes that Israel "will be required over the coming decades to build capabilities of a much larger scope than what there is." He said the necessary technology exists, and that if Israel continues along the right economic path, it will be able to fund the development on its own.
"On these matters," he said, "the person in opposition, and certainly the opposition head, faces a genuine dilemma. In the internal realm, things must be said and must be subject to discussion, argument and criticism, but they cannot be part of the public discourse. There is a paradox concerning everything related to nonconventional matters. This discussion takes place, and I take an active part in it as the opposition chairman, in subcommittees, and I think that to a large extent [I am] also an expediting factor on certain matters. But I cannot go into it in public."
'A responsible opposition'
Benjamin Netanyahu loves to quote Winston Churchill, whose warnings concerning Hitler's arms buildup in the 1930s were not heeded. So, why shouldn't Netanyahu act like Churchill, who became the first lord of the admiralty in the government of his rival, Neville Chamberlain? When such an existential threat is at hand, why shouldn't Netanyahu boost Olmert and run his public campaign around the world as a cabinet member instead of from the opposition?
"My colleagues and I acted as a responsible opposition," said Netanyahu. "We supported the government from day one, including during the war and afterward."
Why drag the country into an election campaign when time is running out and the Iranian bomb is ticking? After all, Ahmadinejad won't wait.
"A vast majority of the public wants elections precisely for this reason, [because] there need to be rapid changes of leadership. Elections can be held in a few short weeks and a government can be brought in to take care of the problem. How will it help you for time to pass like sand between your fingers without any action and without the necessary steps being taken for our defense, to recruit the world against Iran? In such situations, it's desirable for the public to give a renewed mandate to deal with these threats, which didn't happen in the previous elections, which were conducted on the basis of completely different assumptions that in the meantime proved to be false. In a democracy, a government that is chosen on a platform that turns out to no longer be valid needs to go back to the public and ask for a renewed mandate. That's why in a parliamentary democracy, there are ways to replace a government in mid-term, as a result of deficient functioning or a change in mandate."
The Prime Minister's Bureau said in response to Netanyahu's comments that the prime minister was directing a "complex operation" to deal with the possibility of a nuclear Iran.
"Management of the Iranian problem is being coordinate by the prime minister, and involves hundreds and thousands of people in the security branches, intelligence and political bodies of the State of Israel," the bureau said in a statement. "This is a complex operation, more sensitive than any other, to which the prime minister is dedicating long hours of his schedule every week.
"Just recently, the prime minister held a meeting with subcommittee members of the [Knesset] Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, in which he provided them with a summary of Israeli activity on the matter. All the members of the committee – apparently excluding Mr. Netanyahu – received a completely different impression [from the picture he portrays], and even made the effort to point this out repeatedly to the prime minister. There is no subject or topic that Mr. Netanyahu does not try to enlist in an effort to damage the government, even if it will entail damage to the State of Israel's most crucial interests. Thus, he proves once again that there is nothing like scare tactics to serve his political goals."

[91] Presidency Conclusions of the Brussels European Council. 8/9 March 2007:
IV. International relations
41. The European Council welcomed the fact that an agreement has been reached in Mecca on 8 February on the formation of a Palestinian national unity government. It expresses its appreciation for the role of Saudi Arabia and Arab

leaders in bringing about Palestinian reconciliation. The EU stands ready to work with a legitimate Palestinian government that adopts a platform reflecting the Quartet principles. It encourages the Quartet to continue its active contribution to the Middle East Peace Process.
42. The European Council recalls its determination to reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. It reaffirms its call for the full and speedy implementation of resolution 1701 and all other relevant resolutions of the Security Council. It reaffirms its commitment to the establishment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in accordance with resolution 1664 of the Security Council, and urges all members of the international community to lend their support. It commends all constructive international mediation efforts, in particular those of the SG [Secretary General Amr Mussa] of the Arab League and Saudi Arabia, aiming at a solution to the current political crisis in the country. It underlines the necessity of implementing the commitments entered into at the "Paris III" international conference [February 25, 2007].

[92] Hebräisch lesende Nutzer seien auf die Homepage der Winograd-Kommission unter www.vaadatwino.co.il verwiesen.

[93] Al-Haq: Impunity for Violence Against Palestinian Women and Girls Must End, 08.03.2007:
Al-Haq takes the occasion of International Women's Day, under the theme of 'Ending Impunity for Violence against Women and Girls,' to highlight the alarming situation of Palestinian women who not only live under the yoke of an oppressive military occupation that denies them the fundamental protections of international human rights and humanitarian law, but who, like women in countries across the globe, also suffer the denial of their basic rights within their own society.
This year International Women's Day is commemorated as Israel's ongoing occupation of the West Bank; including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, enters its 40th year. Over these 40 years, the Israeli authorities have consistently violated the rights of the Palestinian people as enshrined under international law. Like all Palestinians, Palestinian women and girls are regularly subjected to harassment, intimidation and even violence at Israeli checkpoints scattered throughout the West Bank, as well as being the victims of arbitrary arrest and detention, and having severe restrictions placed on their freedom of movement. Furthermore, Palestinian women have not been exempt from extreme violence at the hands of Israel, the Occupying Power. Since the outbreak of the second *intifada* in September 2000, the Israeli military has killed 264 Palestinian women, including 100 girls.
The few military investigations into these killings, and judicial proceedings that take place, are not pursued in a prompt, effective and impartial manner and are accordingly plagued by severe shortcomings in the execution of justice. The infamous example of 13-year-old Iman al-Hams, wilfully killed when she unwittingly entered an Israeli military zone in Gaza in October 2004, is a case in point. The Israeli soldier concerned was acquitted of all charges against him by a military court, despite clear evidence that he had "confirmed the kill" by repeatedly firing at the already wounded girl from close range.
On International Women's Day, Al-Haq is equally mindful of failures by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in respect of protecting and promoting women's rights. The legislative and institutional framework recognising and enforcing the equal status of women in the enjoyment of all rights must integrate all relevant international human rights standards, especially those relating to non-discrimination.
One of the most deplorable forms of violence that continues to be perpetrated against Palestinian women and girls is violence within the family, which is not effectively punished by Palestinian societal or judicial bodies. The steep decline in the Palestinian economic situation over the past year has further increased the pressures within Palestinian households, rendering female members of the family more vulnerable. Of massive concern is the apparent impunity from which the perpetrators of so called 'honour-killings,' more appropriately described as femicide, benefit as a result of inadequate procedures law enforcement and judicial procedures.
Upon this day Al-Haq therefore calls for:

– the international community to compel Israel to cease all acts that violate the fundamental protections guaranteed to women and girls under international human rights and humanitarian law.
– the international community to shoulder its legal responsibilities and prosecute those who have committed grave breaches of international humanitarian law, such as the wilful killing of Palestinian women or girls.
– the PNA to ensure that all legislation contains provisions for the protection and promotion of the fundamental human rights of women and girls.
– the PNA to effectively investigate and, where necessary, prosecute and implement appropriate penalties for individuals found to have committed acts of harassment, violence and/or femicide against women or girls.
– the PNA to adopt a formal declaration stating that it will adhere to all provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and be held accountable for breaches thereof.

[94] Charlie Charalambous: Separation wall demolished in Cyprus capital, in "Middle East Times" 09.03.2007:
A concrete wall in Nicosia symbolizing the decades-old Cyprus conflict was demolished by Greek Cypriots early Friday to make way for a crossing point in the heart of the world's last divided capital.
The move was welcomed by the Turkish Cypriots, the European Union, the United States, and the United Nations, whose troops have for decades patrolled a buffer zone between the two sides.
Ledra Street, a pedestrian shopping area inside the Venetian walls of the old city, was cordoned off late Thursday as the barrier between the Greek Cypriot south and the Turkish-occupied north was dismantled.
This is a show of goodwill on our side to contribute positively to opening Ledra Street," Cypriot government spokesman Christodoulos Pashardes said.
In Brussels, EU enlargement commissioner Olli Rehn urged Greek and Turkish Cypriots to build on the momentum.
I urge all parties concerned to use the momentum created by this courageous decision and ... to rapidly take the next necessary steps to effectively open the Ledra Street crossing in the center of Nicosia," he said in a statement. "The long-waited opening of the crossing point ... would also encourage the necessary efforts aiming at a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem under the UN auspices."
Washington and London also hailed the development.
We consider the opening of Ledra Street as very much desired to end the division of Europe's last divided city," US Ambassador Ronald Schlicher told reporters in Nicosia.
British High Commissioner Peter Millett said: "We would like to believe that the wall being demolished will create a climate of mutual trust and serve as a catalyst to achieve progress."
The surprise move came nearly four years after the opening of an initial crossing allowed unprecedented movement across the buffer zone for the first time in three decades.
Nicosia's first woman mayor, Eleni Mavrou, said "the important thing now is for Ledra to open, to have communication, and the city to come to life."
But Pashardes said that people could not start crossing as long as Turkish troops remain in the city's northern sector – "This doesn't mean Ledra is open yet."
Cyprus has been divided along ethnic lines since 1974, when Turkey seized its northern third in response to an Athens-engineered Greek Cypriot coup in Nicosia aimed at uniting the island with Greece.
Turkey, which still maintains around 42,500 troops in northern Cyprus, had no immediate reaction.
Pashardes said that the government had invited the Turkish Cypriots to discuss outstanding issues "if they really want Ledra Street to be opened."
Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos said in Brussels "the obstacle is not the wall but the Turkish troops. If the troops pull back and allow the UN to check for landmines, as we believe there are, then the crossing can open, but troops must withdraw."

Opposing troops are at their closest in Ledra Street, and the government would like to see Turkish and Cypriot National Guard troops pull back some 100 meters (yards) from positions that separate them by only about 50 meters.
House of Representatives Speaker Demetris Christofias, acting president while Papadopoulos is abroad, said "the National Guard are fully prepared to move back. If the other side ... responds then it will happen soon; if not, it won't."
Ferdi Sabit Soyer, prime minister of the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, welcomed the demolition as a "positive development."
He said that his administration, recognized only by Turkey, would soon begin work on opening a passage in the area.
The UN chief of mission, Michael Moller, called the demolition a "very welcome and positive contribution of great symbolic significance."
The peacekeeping force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) is "assisting both sides with practical arrangements to move this much anticipated process forward" and "expedite progress," Moller said.
Before a normal crossing point can operate, crumbling buildings will need to be shored up and the area swept for landmines.
Once the sides are in agreement as to the way ahead, UNFICYP will immediately move, with EU funded support, to ensure the area's overall safety," Moller said.
A makeshift partition has replaced the wall in the meantime. UNFICYP estimated that it could take six weeks to make a viable crossing once both sides agree.
A crossing there was mooted in 2005, but a dispute over an elevated walkway erected by the Turkish Cypriots halted proceedings until it was dismantled in January.
Ledra Street is where barricades were first erected in Nicosia during intercommunal violence in 1963. A year later, UN peacekeeping troops arrived and have remained ever since.
Cyprus joined the EU in May 2004 but there has been no major progress in reunification despite UN-sponsored talks between Papadopoulos and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat in July 2006.

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The speech by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan before a joint meting of the U.S. Congress, Washington D.C., 07.03.2007:
"In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
Madam Speaker,
Mr. Vice President,
Honorable Senators and Members of Congress,
My friends,
Thank you for such a warm welcome. It is an honor to stand, as my father did, before this historic institution. Allow me to thank you, on behalf of all Jordanians.
Jordan and the United States have had a long friendship. It is a special privilege to be here in the year that the American Congress welcomes its first woman Speaker, and its first Muslim-American member of Congress. These milestones send a message around the world about the America I know so well, a place where individuality is nurtured, a place where hard work is rewarded, a place where achievement is celebrated. The America I know so well believes that opportunity and justice belong to all.
In my days in Massachusetts, I also learned something of New England virtues. There wasn't actually a law against talking too much, but there was definitely an attitude that you didn't speak unless you could improve on silence.
Today, I must speak; I cannot be silent.
I must speak about a cause that is urgent for your people and for mine. I must speak about peace in the Middle East. I must speak about peace replacing the division, war, and conflict that have brought such disaster for the region and for the world.
This was the cause that brought my father King Hussein here in 1994. With Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin beside him, he spoke of a new vision for the Middle East. Their courageous work for peace received bipartisan support from your leaders. And there was tremendous hope for a new era. There was tremendous hope that people would be brought together. There was tremendous hope that a final and comprehensive settlement of all the issues would be achieved.

Thirteen years later, that work is still not completed. And until it is, we are all at risk. We are all at risk of being victims of further violence resulting from ideologies of terror and hatred. It is our greatest and most urgent duty to prevent such dangers to our region, to your country and to the world. The choice is ours: an open world full of promise, progress and justice for all; or a closed world of divided peoples, fear, and unfulfilled dreams. Nothing impacts this choice more than the future of peace in the Middle East.

I come to you today at a rare, and indeed historic, moment of opportunity, when there is a new international will to end the catastrophe. And I believe that America, with its enduring values, its moral responsibility, and yes, its unprecedented power, must play the central role.

Some may say, 'Peace is difficult, we can live with the status quo.' But, my friends, violent killings are taking place as part of this status quo. Palestinians and Israelis are not the only victims. We saw the violence ricochet into destruction in Lebanon last summer. And people around the world have been the victims of terrorists and extremists, who use the grievances of this conflict to legitimize and encourage acts of violence. Americans and Jordanians and others have suffered and survived terrorist attacks. In this room, there are representatives of American families and Jordanian families who have lost loved ones. Thousands of people have paid the highest price, the loss of their life. Thousands more continue to pay this terrible price, for their loved ones will never return. Are we going to let these thousands of lives be taken in vain? Has it become acceptable to lose that most basic of human rights? The right to live?

The status quo is also pulling the region and the world towards greater danger. As public confidence in the peace process has dropped, the cycle of crises is spinning faster, and with greater potential for destruction. Changing military doctrine and weaponry pose new dangers. Increasing numbers of external actors are intervening with their own strategic agendas, raising new dangers of proliferation and crisis. These are groups that seek even more division: faith against faith, nation against nation, community against community. Any further erosion in the situation would be serious for the future of moderation and coexistence, in the region and beyond. Have we all lost the will to live together in peace celebrating one another's strengths and differences?

Some may say, 'But there are other, urgent challenges.' How can there be anything more urgent than the restoration of a world where all people, not only some people, all people have the opportunity to live peacefully? This is not only a moral imperative, it is essential to the future of our world, because long-term, violent crisis is the enemy of all global prosperity and progress.

Certainly, our era faces critical issues. There is great public concern here, just as in our region, about the conflict in Iraq. The entire international community has vital decisions to make about the path forward, and how to ensure Iraq's security, unity, and future. But we cannot lose sight of a profound reality. The wellspring of regional division, the source of resentment and frustration far beyond, is the denial of justice and peace in Palestine.

There are those who say, 'It's not our business.' But this Congress knows: there are no bystanders in the 21st Century, there are no curious onlookers, there is no one who is not affected by the division and hatred that is present in our world.

Some will say: 'This is not the core issue in the Middle East.' I come here today as your friend to tell you that this is the core issue. And this core issue is not only producing severe consequences for our region, it is producing severe consequences for our world.

The security of all nations and the stability of our global economy are directly affected by the Middle East conflict. Across oceans, the conflict has estranged societies that should be friends. I meet Muslims thousands of miles away who have a deep, personal response to the suffering of the Palestinian people. They want to know how it is, that ordinary Palestinians are still without rights and without a country. They ask whether the West really means what it says about equality and respect and universal justice.

Yes, my friends, today I must speak. I cannot be silent.

Sixty years of Palestinian dispossession, forty years under occupation, a stop-and-go peace process, all this has left a bitter legacy of disappointment and despair, on all sides. It is time to create a new and different legacy, one that begins right now;

one that can set a positive tone for the American and Middle East relationship; one that can restore hope to our region's people, to your people, and to the people of this precious world. Nothing can achieve that more effectively, nothing can assert America's moral vision more clearly, nothing can reach and teach the world's youth more directly, than your leadership in a peace process that delivers results not next year, not in five years, but this year.
How do we get there? Not by a solution imposed by one side. A lasting peace can only be built on understanding, agreement and compromise.
It begins with courage and vision. We, all of us, must take risks for peace. The Arab states recognized that reality in 2002, when we unanimously approved the Arab Peace Initiative. It puts forward a path for both sides, to achieve what people want and need: a collective peace treaty with Israel and normal relations with every Arab state, collective security guarantees for all the countries of the region, including Israel, an end to the conflict, a dream every Israeli citizen has longed for since the creation of Israel, and an agreed solution to the refugee problem, a withdrawal from Arab territories occupied since 1967, and a sovereign, viable, and independent Palestine.
The commitment we made in the Arab Peace Initiative is real. And our states are involved in ongoing efforts to advance a fair, just, and comprehensive peace. His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia initiated the 2002 proposal; today, he continues to rally international support. Momentum is also building among Muslim countries outside the Arab world. Ten days ago, in Islamabad, the foreign ministers of key Muslim states met. They came together to assure Palestinians and Israelis that they are not alone, that we back their effort to make and build peace.
The goal must be a peace in which all sides gain. It must be anchored in security and opportunity for all.
It must be a peace that will free young Palestinians to focus on a future of progress and prosperity.
It must be a peace that makes Israel a part of the neighborhood, a neighborhood that extends from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, across the breadth of the southern Mediterranean, to the coast of the Indian Ocean.
It must be a peace that enables the entire region to look forward with excitement and hope, putting its resources into productive growth, partnering across borders to advance development, finding opportunities, and solving common challenges.
This goal is visionary, but my friends, it is attainable. History shows that longtime adversaries can define new relationships of peace and cooperation. The groundwork for a comprehensive, final settlement is already in place. At Taba, as in the Geneva Accords, the parties have outlined the parameters of the solution.
But we need all hands on deck. The international community, especially the United States, must be engaged in moving the process forward to achieve real results. Above all, we must make our process serve our purpose. We must achieve an agreed solution to the conflict.
Madam Speaker,
Mr. Vice President,
Honorable Members,
Your responsibility today is paramount. Your potential to help Palestinians and Israelis find peace is unrivalled. This is because the people of the region still regard the United States as the key to peace, the one country most capable of bringing the two sides closer together, holding them accountable, and making a just settlement reality.
Time after time, there has been progress towards peace when Americans have actively engaged. Camp David, Madrid, Wye River: nearly every breakthrough was accomplished when America was determined to help the parties succeed.
On behalf of all those who seek and strive for peace in my part of the world, I ask you now to exert that leadership once again. We ask you to join with us in an historic effort of courage and vision. We ask you to hear our call, to honor the spirit of King Hussein and Yitzhak Rabin, and help fulfill the aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace today.
Let me reaffirm that Jordan is committed to playing a positive role in the peace process. It is part of our larger commitment to global co-existence and progress. Ours is an Islamic country with a proud record of diversity, moderation, and shared respect.

Allow me to say, we thank the Congress and the Administration for supporting Jordan's progress and development. I deeply value the partnership between our peoples, and the contributions of so many Americans to the future of our country.
My friends,
"A decent respect for the rights and dignity of all nations, large and small." That's how President Roosevelt – the great F.D.R. – described the basis of American foreign policy. He pledged American support for the four freedoms, freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion, everywhere in the world.
The Four Freedoms speech was given right here, before Congress. And that's entirely fitting. Because it is here in the People's House, that the voices and values of America have made hope real for so many people.
Today, the people of the Middle East are searching for these four freedoms. Today, the people of the Middle East are searching for new hope, hope for a future of prosperity and peace. We have seen the danger and destruction of violence, hatred, and injustice. But we have also seen what people can achieve when they are empowered, when they break down walls, when they commit to the future. And we know that Middle East peace can be a global beginning, creating new possibilities for our region and the entire world.
We look to you to play an historic role. Eleven American presidents and thirty American congresses have already faced this ongoing crisis. For not the future generation, but the generation alive today, let us say together: No more! Let us say together: Let's solve this! Let us say together: Yes, we will achieve this!
No Palestinian father should be helpless to feed his family and build a future for his sons and daughters. No Israeli mother should fear when her child boards a bus. Not one more generation should grow up thinking that violence and conflict are the norm.
As Roosevelt also said, "the justice of morality must and will win in the end." But he knew that it was up to responsible nations to stand up for justice when injustice threatens.
This is our challenge as well. And we must not leave it to another generation to meet this challenge.
Thirteen years ago, my father was here to talk about his hopes for peace. Today, we are talking about a promise that is within our reach.
We can wait no longer and that is why I am here before you. We must work together to restore Palestine, a nation in despair and without hope. We must work together to restore peace, hope and opportunity to the Palestinian people. And in so doing, we will begin a process of building peace, not only throughout the region, but throughout the world. How much more bloodshed and how many more lives will it cost for this grave situation to be resolved?
I say: No more bloodshed and no more lives pointlessly taken!
The young boy, traveling to school with his brother in Palestine, let him have a life of peace.
The mother, watching with fear as her children board a bus in Israel, let her have a life of peace.
The father in Lebanon, working hard to provide an education for his children, let him have a life of peace.
The little girl, born in Iraq, with her wide eyes full of wonder, let her have a life of peace.
The family, together eating their evening meal, in Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Europe, Australia, and the Middle East, let them all have a life of peace.
Today my friends, we must speak; we cannot be silent.
The next time a Jordanian, a Palestinian, or an Israeli comes before you, let it be to say: Thank you for helping peace become a reality.
Thank you very much."

[96] Botschaft des Staates Israel in Berlin, 06.03.2007:
Mit Entsetzen und Empörung reagiert Shimon Stein, Botschafter des Staates Israel in Berlin, auf Presseberichte mit Äußerungen einiger katholischer Bischöfe während ihrer Reise nach Israel und zur Palästinensischen Behörde in der vergangenen Woche.

Man kann zur israelischen Politik unterschiedliche Meinungen haben, man kann sie auch kritisieren – aber es kommt auf die Wortwahl, auf die Begriffe und die historischen Vergleiche an, die man verwendet. Wenn man Begriffe wie „Warschauer Ghetto“ oder „Rassismus“ im Zusammenhang mit der israelischen beziehungsweise palästinensischen Politik benutzt, dann hat man alles vergessen oder nichts gelernt und moralisch versagt. Anstatt sich in Demagogie zu üben, hätten sich die Bischöfe über die Ursachen informieren müssen, die israelische Regierungen veranlasst haben, die erzwungenen und notwendigen Sicherheitsmaßnahmen zu ergreifen, um Israelis vor Terror zu schützen. Darüber hinaus hätten die Bischöfe sich auch mit Angehörigen der Familien von über 1000 Israelis treffen können, die – nur weil sie Juden waren – in den vergangenen sechs Jahren dem palästinensischen Terror zum Opfer fielen. Das Erhalten des Lebens hat Vorrang vor der Qualität des Lebens, das sollten selbst Bischöfe nicht vergessen – auch wenn sie anders sozialisiert wurden.
Zaun oder Mauer, die als Sicherheitsmaßnahmen von Menschen gebaut wurden, können, wenn die politischen Bedingungen sich ändern, wieder abgebaut werden. Die Opfer von Terroristen kann man nicht wieder ins Leben zurückrufen.
Eine Seite des Konflikts zu dämonisieren und doppelte Maßstäbe anzulegen, kann nicht der Weg derjenigen sein, die einen Beitrag zum Frieden leisten wollen. Die israelische Regierung ist jederzeit bereit, mit den Kräften auf der palästinensischen Seite, die das Existenzrecht Israels anerkennen, dem Terror abschwören und Verträge, die unterschrieben wurden, erfüllen, in Verhandlungen zu treten über die Realisierung der Vision von zwei Staaten, die friedlich nebeneinander leben.
Wir sind auf Hilfe und Rat angewiesen, aber wenn Bischöfe sich so äußern wie während dieser Reise, tragen sie nicht zu Aussöhnung und Frieden bei, sondern erzeugen bei uns das Gegenteil. Darüber hinaus leisten sie auch keinen Beitrag zu einem sachlichen katholisch-jüdischen Dialog.

[97] Stellungnahme des Sekretärs der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, P. Dr. Hans Langendörfer SJ, zu den Äußerungen von Botschafter Shimon vom 6. März 2007, 06.03.2007:
In einer Pressemitteilung vom heutigen Tage hat der Botschafter des Staates Israel in Deutschland, Shimon Stein, auf Presseberichte über die Reise des Ständigen Rates der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz ins Heilige Land reagiert. Dazu stelle ich fest:
1. Der Besuch der deutschen Bischöfe in Israel und in den palästinensischen Gebieten war durchgängig von einer hohen Sensibilität für die Belange beider Konfliktparteien bestimmt. In *allen* Ansprachen, aber auch in den Gesprächen mit dem stellvertretenden israelischen Ministerpräsidenten Shimon Peres und dem Präsidenten der Palästinensischen Autonomiebehörde, Mahmud Abbas, hat der Vorsitzende der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Karl Kardinal Lehmann, das von bestimmten Seiten immer noch in Frage gestellte Existenzrecht des Staates Israels nachdrücklich unterstrichen und auf die Bedrohung seiner Einwohner durch den Terrorismus hingewiesen. Es kann deshalb keine Rede davon sein, die deutschen Bischöfe hätten bei ihrem Aufenthalt vor Ort *eine* Seite des Konflikts dämonisiert und doppelte Maßstäbe angelegt. Das Gegenteil ist richtig.
2. Anlässlich des Besuchs in Bethlehem, d. h. unter dem Eindruck der bedrückenden Situation, die an diesem Ort herrscht, sind aus der emotionalen Betroffenheit Einzelner heraus einige wenige sehr persönliche Bemerkungen gefallen, die bereits selbstkritisch richtiggestellt wurden. Dies gilt vor allem für eine Nebenbemerkung, die auf das Warschauer Ghetto anspielte.
3. Kardinal Lehmann hat die Haltung der deutschen Bischöfe in der Gedenkstätte Yad Vashem und in seiner Abschluss-Presseerklärung verbindlich zum Ausdruck gebracht. Nachdrücklich bedauere ich diesen Missklang, der sich in die Reise eingeschlichen hat. Er sollte jedoch nicht dazu verleiten, den überaus positiven Impuls in Frage zu stellen, den die Bischöfe mit ihrer Visite sowohl auf israelischer wie auf palästinensischer Seite, bei den Vertretern der Regierungen wie der Bevölkerungen gesetzt haben.

[98] Statement des Vorsitzenden der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Karl kardinal Lehmann, zum, Abschluss der Pilgerreise des Ständigen Rates der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz ins Heilige Land vom 26.02.-04.03.2007:

Wenn wir heute Nachmittag zurück nach Deutschland fliegen, liegen ereignisreiche und intensive Tage im Heiligen Land hinter uns. Viele Eindrücke werden sich erst mit etwas Abstand richtig setzen und verarbeitet werden. So möchte ich heute nur ein erstes Resümee ziehen.
Es war das erste Mal, dass der Ständige Rat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, also die Ortsbischöfe der 27 deutschen Diözesen, eine Pilgerreise ins Heilige Land unternommen hat. Es war überhaupt die erste Zusammenkunft des Ständigen Rates im Ausland, sieht man von einem Treffen in Rom einmal ab. Und ich glaube auch für meine Mitbrüder sagen zu dürfen: Wir haben dieses Experiment nicht bereut. Im Gegenteil, wir sind froh, dass wir uns auf diesen Weg gemacht haben. Es ist auch für die deutschen Bischöfe wichtig, ihre Verantwortungsgemeinschaft lebendig zu erfahren und zu erneuern. Das gibt neuen Schwung und neue Kraft im Alltag unseres Wirkens.
Ins Heilige Land sind wir in erster Linie als Pilger gekommen. Wir wollten zu den Quellen des biblischen und zumal des christlichen Glaubens gehen. Es ist für uns Bischöfe bereichernd, nicht nur als Einzelne, sondern auch gemeinsam unseren Glauben und unsere Aufgabe von den tiefsten Gründen her zu erneuern. An bedeutenden christlichen Wallfahrtsstätten haben wir die heilige Messe und das Stundengebet der Kirche gefeiert: in der Brotvermehrungskirche und der Primatskapelle in Tabgha, in Nazareth vor der Verkündigungsgrotte, in der Grabeskirche in Jerusalem, in der Katharinenkirche bei der Geburtsgrotte in Bethlehem und heute hier mit den deutschen Benediktinern in der Dormitio-Basilika auf dem Zionsberg in Jerusalem. So kamen wir nicht nur mit den Heiligen Stätten, den geschichtlichen Zeugnissen des Christentums, in Berührung, sondern haben die heilbringende Gegenwart Gottes auch in unserer Zeit erfahren.
Besonders herausstellen möchte ich, dass wir gleich zu Beginn unserer Reise in Tabgha an der Grundsteinsegnung für einen Neubau des Benediktiner-Klosters teilnehmen durften. Es freut uns, dass die benediktinische Gemeinschaft immer wieder Novizen aufnehmen kann.
Ebenso wichtig wie der Besuch heiliger Stätten waren für uns die Begegnungen und das Gespräch mit den Christen vor Ort und der Besuch ihrer sozialen Einrichtungen und Schulen. Wir haben unserer Verbundenheit mit den Christen hier im Heiligen Land Ausdruck gegeben, die nur knapp zwei Prozent der Bevölkerung ausmachen. Oft leben sie unter schwierigen Bedingungen. Besonders in Zeiten gewalttätiger Konflikte erfahren Minderheiten besonders stark ihre gesellschaftliche Randlage. In Israel sind sie als Christen und Araber in einer doppelten Minderheitenposition. In den palästinensischen Gebieten sind sie durch einen wachsenden Islamismus herausgefordert. Nach wie vor bedrückend ist die hohe Zahl derer, die das Land verlassen.
In Galiläa, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Ramallah und Jerusalem sind wir Christen und christlichen Gemeinden begegnet, die uns an ihren Alltagserfahrungen haben teilhaben lassen. Unsere bischöflichen Mitbrüder, Erzbischof Elias Chacour (griech.-kath.), Bischof Paul Sayah (maronitisch), Bischof Giacinto Marcuzzo, Erzbischof Antonio Franco (Apostolischer Nuntius in Israel und Zypern und Apostolischer Delegat in Jerusalem und Palästina), der Lateinische Patriarch von Jerusalem, Michel Sabbah, aber auch viele Priester und Ordensleute haben uns anschaulich von der Situation der Christen berichtet.
Wir haben erfahren können, dass es im Heiligen Land eine sehr vitale katholische Kirche gibt, die sich nicht nur durch ihr gottesdienstliches Leben, sondern auch durch ihre soziale Arbeit auszeichnet. In der Schule der Salvatorianerinnen in Nazareth, in der Schmidt-Schule in Ost-Jerusalem und in der Katholischen Bethlehem-Universität konnten wir erleben, wie Christen und Muslime gemeinsam lernen. Ein Beispiel für das soziale Engagement der Kirche ist das Babyhospital der Caritas in Bethlehem, wo unter schwierigen Bedingungen versucht wird, palästinensischen Familien und ihren Kindern wirkungsvolle medizinische Hilfe zukommen zu lassen. Es ist insgesamt beachtlich, in welchem Maß die Kirche im Heiligen Land durch Schulen und soziale Einrichtungen aller Art einen Beitrag zum gesellschaftlichen Leben leistet.
In diesem Zusammenhang sind die rechtliche Stellung der Kirche und die Besteuerung kirchlicher Organisationen und kirchlichen Besitzes von hohem Belang. Dies haben wir auch im Gespräch mit Shimon Peres, dem stellvertretenden Ministerpräsidenten des Staates Israel, deutlich herausgestellt. Es

ist erfreulich, dass Peres unserer Delegation zugesichert hat, sich persönlich dafür einzusetzen, dass die Verhandlungen zwischen Israel und dem Vatikan zügig abgeschlossen werden.
Wir werden weiterhin das in unserer Macht Stehende tun, um unsere Solidarität mit der christlichen Minderheit vor Ort zum Ausdruck zu bringen. Wir wollen mit dazu beizutragen, dass die Christen hier eine Zukunft haben. Das Heilige Land darf kein Freilicht-Museum des Christentums werden. Der freie Zugang zu den Heiligen Stätten muss für die Angehörigen aller Religionen gewährleistet sein. Wir ermutigen ausdrücklich alle Gläubigen, ins Heilige Land zu pilgern.
Eine der wichtigsten Stationen unserer Reise war der Besuch in der Holocaust-Gedenkstätte Yad Vashem. Für uns alle war dies ein bewegender und auch erschütternder Moment. Wir haben an diesem Ort unterstrichen, dass es für alle Deutschen – letztlich auch für die ganze Menschheit – unerlässlich bleibt, sich dem Völkermord an den Juden auch in Gegenwart und Zukunft zu stellen. Dies habe ich auch in meiner Eintragung in das Gedenkbuch zum Ausdruck bringen wollen: „Niemand kann frei sein, der frei sein will vom Gedenken an die Shoa."
Vor diesem Hintergrund bin ich besonders dankbar für den herzlichen Willkommengruß des aschkenasischen Oberrabbiners von Israel, Yona Metzger, der am Mittwoch eine Delegation mit dem Vorsitzenden unserer Unterkommission für die Beziehungen zum Judentum in Jerusalem empfangen hat. Dies zeigt, dass wir in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten neue Kapitel des christlich-jüdischen Dialogs haben aufschlagen können.
Natürlich war es auch ein wichtiges Ziel unserer Reise, uns über die politische Situation im Heiligen Land zu informieren. Was die israelische Seite betrifft, dienten dazu Gespräche mit dem stellvertretenden israelischen Ministerpräsidenten Shimon Peres und dem ehemaligen israelischen Botschafter in Deutschland Avi Primor. Daneben gab es eine Begegnung mit dem palästinensischen Präsidenten, Mahmud Abbas, und leitenden Mitarbeitern der Autonomiebehörde. In all diesen Gesprächen ist deutlich geworden, wie verfahren sich die politische Situation im Augenblick darstellt und wie wenig Hoffnung auf eine tragfähige Lösung auf beiden Seiten besteht. Die Israelis betonen beständig ihr Interesse an Sicherheit, die durch Terroristen nachhaltig bedroht wird. Die Palästinenser wiederum sehen den alleinigen Grund des Konfliktes in der Besetzung palästinensischer Gebiete durch Israel. Das ohnehin geringe Vertrauen zwischen beiden Konfliktparteien scheint – so haben wir bei vielen Begegnungen erfahren – immer noch weiter abzunehmen. Der Vertrauensverlust wird von Vielen als geradezu irreparabel gesehen. Das ist eine gefährliche Sackgasse. Dies hat uns gerade in den letzten Tagen trotz einiger Lichtblicke, vor allem in der Begegnung mit jungen Menschen, bedrückt.
Unter den Palästinensern hat sich darüber hinaus der Eindruck verdichtet, dass mit dem Ausbau der Siedlungen, dem Bau von Sicherheitszäunen und Mauern, der Schaffung getrennter Straßennetze und dem System der Check-Points zunehmend Tatsachen geschaffen werden, die auf eine Verfestigung des Status Quo hinauslaufen. Wir haben den Eindruck gewonnen, dass all diese Maßnahmen zusammengenommen zwar einen aktuellen Gewinn an Sicherheit für die Israelis bedeuten, dem Frieden auf lange Sicht aber nicht dienen können.
Als Bischöfe können wir keine politischen Vermittler sein und keine politischen Auswege aus der Misere vorzeichnen. Wohl aber können und müssen wir immer wieder auf das Leiden der Menschen aufmerksam machen. Wir wissen um die Angst der Israelis, die von Terrorismus bedroht sind und deren staatliches Existenzrecht von manchen immer noch in Frage gestellt wird. Bei unseren Besuchen in der Westbank haben wir aber auch die erschreckende, geradezu katastrophale Situation kennen gelernt, der die Palästinenser ausgesetzt sind: eine Arbeitslosigkeit von bis zu 60%, drastische Behinderungen der Bewegungsfreiheit, die manche Familien auf Dauer voneinander trennen, eine Praxis an den Kontrollpunkten, die viele Palästinenser als demütigend empfinden – all dies lässt viele in Hoffnungslosigkeit versinken und befördert auch eine politische und religiöse Radikalisierung. Besonders schlimm haben wir die Lage in Bethlehem erlebt, wo sich die Menschen angesichts des Verlaufs der Sicherheitsanlagen geradezu als eingeschlossen empfinden.
Immerhin verbinden viele, auch in den Kirchen, eine gewisse Hoffnung mit den wieder aufgenommenen Bemühungen des Nahost-Quartetts und mit der deutschen Ratspräsidentschaft in der Europäischen Union. Angesichts der Realitäten wird

man in seinen Erwartungen aber bescheiden bleiben müssen. Dies gilt auch für alles, was die Kirche vor Ort und weltweit unternehmen kann, um zur Lösung des Konflikts beizutragen. Dennoch gehört es zur Grundstruktur unseres Glaubens, Hoffnung gegen alle Hoffnung zu bewahren. Anlass dafür bietet ganz sicher auch das mutige Zeugnis der Kirchen im Heiligen Land, nicht zuletzt der Orden, die wichtige Beiträge für eine Aussöhnung leisten.
Ein besonderer Dank für mannigfaltige Hilfe gilt an dieser Stelle dem Deutschen Botschafter in Israel, Dr. Harald Kindermann, und dem Leiter der Ständigen Vertretung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Ramallah, Jörg Ranau. Auch der Deutsche Verein vom Heiligen Lande hat Vieles zum Gelingen unserer Pilgerreise beigetragen.

[99] Vgl. Reiner Bernstein: Kontraproduktive Empörung, in www.reiner-bernstein.de.

[100] Yakob M. Rabkin: Gap among Jews widens on question of Zionism, in "Baltimore Sun" 08.03.2007:
A profound division has developed between Zionist advocates of Israel and Jews, secular and religious, who reject or question Zionism and actions taken by the state of Israel.
Public debate about Israel's place in Jewish continuity has become open and candid.
Many Jews try to come to terms with the contradictions between the Judaism they profess to adhere to and the Zionist ideology that has taken hold of them. This coincides with serious concerns expressed across Israel's political and religious spectrum about the future of Israel.
Quite a few Jews now publicly ask whether the chronically besieged ethnic nation-state in the Middle East is "good for the Jews." Many continue to be concerned that militant Zionism destroys Jewish moral values and endangers Jews in Israel and elsewhere. This debate has entered pop culture as well: The recent film Munich by Steven Spielberg sharply focuses on the moral cost of Israel's chronic reliance on force.
The Israel lobby in the United States, aligned with the nationalist right in Israel, viciously attacked the Jewish director and his film even before it was released. It also lashed out at several books published over the past few years – Prophets Outcast, Wrestling With Zion, The Question of Zion, The Myths of Zionism – all authored by Jews who are concerned about the same essential conflict between Zionism and Jewish values.
A few weeks ago, the Israel lobby (through its constituent American Jewish Committee) issued a report alleging that Jews who criticize Israel endanger its "right to exist" and foment anti-Semitism. This provoked a number of prominent Jews in Britain, Canada and the United States to speak out, moving candid debate about Israel into mainstream, even conservative, publications. In January, the eminently pro-establishment Economist published a survey of "the state of the Jews" and an editorial that called on rank-and-file Diaspora Jews to move away from the "my country, right or wrong" attitude adopted by many Jewish organizations.
Making a stand for Jewish emancipation from the state of Israel and its policies has bridged some old divides and created new ones. Thus, an ultra-Orthodox critic of Israel, usually antagonistic to Reform Judaism, commended a Reform rabbi for saying that "when Israel's Jewish supporters abroad don't speak out against disastrous policies that neither guarantee safety for her citizens nor produce the right climate in which to try and reach a just peace with the Palestinians they are betraying millennial Jewish values and acting against Israel's own long-term interests."
Their relationship with the state of Israel and with Zionism has polarized the Jews. The axis along which this polarization has taken shape does not correspond to any of the habitual divisions: Ashkenazi/Sephardic, observant/nonobservant, Orthodox/non-Orthodox.
In each of these categories are Jews for whom national pride, even arrogance (chutzpah), is a positive value, and who give their enthusiastic support to the state that incarnates what they identify as a life force, a triumph of the will and a guarantee of Jewish survival.

But each of these categories also includes Jews who believe that the very idea of a Jewish state, and the human and moral price that it demands, undermines all that Judaism teaches, particularly the core values of humility, compassion and kindness. They, along with Israel's staunchest supporters, point up the paradox that has seen Israel, often presented as an ultimate haven, become one of the most precarious places for Jews. Israeli media report unprecedented levels of concern not only for the future of the state but also for the physical survival of its inhabitants. Some attempt to redefine "Israel's national purpose" as a means to revitalize Israel's largely demoralized society.
Divisions about Israel and Zionism are so acute that they may split Jews as irremediably as did the advent of Christianity two millennia ago. Christianity, which embodies a Greek reading of the Torah, eventually broke away from Judaism. Like Christianity, Zionism, reflecting a nationalist, romantic reading of the Torah and Jewish history, has come to fascinate many Jews.
It remains to be seen whether the fracture between those who hold fast to Jewish moral tradition and the converts to Jewish nationalism may one day be mended. However fateful for Jews and Judaism, this fracture may not necessarily affect Israel, which nowadays counts many more evangelical Christians than Jews among its unconditional supporters.

[101] Joint Press Conference on the Israel-European Union Association Council Meeting with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner and Israel Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni Brussels, 5 March 2007, transmitted by the Information Department, Israel Foreign Ministry, Jerusalem:
FM Steinmeier: [Translation] I want to welcome in particular, the Israeli delegation. We have already had a first meeting discussing the state of European Union and Israel relations. This is the seventh meeting of the Association Council, and it is the second time that my Israeli colleague has participated in such a meeting – and it was my first so I have had, if you like, to learn the ropes.
It think that it is fair to say that, over recent years, we have been able to step up and intensify our relations, not just economic relations, but certainly economic relations. Europe remains, and we hope that Europe will remain in the future, a most significant economic partner of Israel, as far as imports go – second most significant for exports, and over recent years, we have been able to intensify our trade relations and also our exchanges.
I think, for example, of the scientific field where Israel has joined Galileo. It has been possible to integrate Israel into the Sixth Framework Research Program and we are working on the Seventh. So, there are many areas where already, we enjoy very close cooperation, and think that it is true that we have been able to develop our relations and our mutual trust over recent years. Our Israeli colleague will probably say something about being more specific in producing results from our mutual relations, and we are going to set up a reflection group with the Commission and with Council Secretariat, and with Israel participating. Benita will talk about specific areas, that we can envisage for a future cooperation, with a view to producing tangible results.
We will be moving on to dinner shortly and over dinner we will be discussing the current status of the Middle Eastern peace process and we will be talking about discussions between important representatives from the Palestinian and the Israeli side.
FM Livni: Thank you so much. We are now between the discussion of our bilateral relationship and dinner, when we will discuss the situation in the region. I would like to be honest and to say that there is a kind of a relationship, or a connection between the situation in the region and between the relations of Israel and the European Union.
It was clearly said in Essen in 1994 that the relations between Israel and the European Union are of a special nature, but it is up to us to explore and to find a way to enhance the relationship and what kind of ways we can find to in order to enhance it and to explore it. For me, the decision that was taken today should give expression to the Israeli special relations status, with relations of the European Union that was recognized in Essen, both through full implementation of the ENP

and also by establishing a special working group in order to examine how to go beyond the existing framework and to upgrade our special relationship.
Israel and Europe share the same values, the same goals, the same interests, so clearly we can work together – not only in terms of the bilateral relationship, but also when it comes to different and more complicated issues of our region. I come from a very troubled region. But I do believe that the world is now divided between the moderates and the extremists. And Israel and Europe, like moderate Palestinians and Lebanese and other Moslem and Arab states, share the same goals and the same interests. So it is of crucial importance to see, not only the new threats in the region, but also to see whether there are new windows of opportunity and to work together.
It is also important to say that in the last few years, there has been a change in the relationship between Israel and Europe – a good change. In the past, we talked about special relations – when it comes to economic relations, it works for us and for Europe, but sometimes we have had some differences when it comes to the situation in the region.
Israel now is more open to Europe. We have the EU BAM [Border Assistance Mission] in the Rafah passage, UN Resolution 1701 regarding the conflict in Lebanon, and part of the outcome is European involvement as part of the international forces in Lebanon. And the European Union is now a part of the Quartet, which also refers almost on a monthly basis to the situation in the region.
I believe that it is crucial to us not only to see what we can share as ideas as values, as vision, but also how to translate it into actions together, in an understanding that the situation is complicated. But yet when it comes to the conflict, Israel adopted a vision of a two state solution and Israel would like to work with the moderates in order to create a better future for the region.
When it comes to the bilateral relationship, I would like to thank Frank for the Presidency, and Benita Ferrero-Waldner, with whom we had our fruitful talks only last week in Israel, and I do believe that we have a lot also to achieve, but we are in the right direction, and it depends on us basically.
EU Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner: Thank you very much, both Frank and Tzipi. I think that it was a very fruitful Association Council until now, and it shows indeed that in the last two years, we have already achieved quite a bit. I would say that, indeed, Israel was the first country of the Neighborhood Policy with which we introduced the Action Plan and I think you are among the first again that would like to go further within the framework of the Neighborhood Policy.
This is a very comprehensive policy. I think that it is very important to say that there is this possibility, the element of differentiation. That means: each and every country has a chance to go further in the framework of the neighborhood policy according to its own achievements, its own objectives, and our common understanding.
We have already done a lot. It is not only research and development. Israel is also now participating fully in the navigation satellite program, in Galileo, there are negotiations on the way on the liberalization of trade in services and agricultural products, and, indeed, we have just concluded the participation of Israel in the Seventh Framework for Research and Development – thus, making Israel an integral part of the European research area.
But our relationship can become much broader and deeper, and I think the communication on the Neighborhood Policy Action Plan that we have just made in general is, of course, also an offer to Israel and this reflection group, where the Commission of course, will have an important part, will certainly, exactly see where there are interests from both sides and where we can enhance and in the future then also make a decision for next steps to be done. I am very happy about that and I hope that we can go on, on this very fruitful path. Thank you.
Q: Foreign Minister Livni, how do you view the European position towered the hopefully soon to be named Palestinian unity government? Are you satisfied with the European view that it is a hopeful sign; a moment of real potential forward movement? And also, how did you feel when you saw the pictures of President Ahmed Ahmadinejad being welcomed in Saudi Arabia? How does Israel view the engagement of Saudi Arabia now with Iran?
FM Livni: It is clear that after the Hamas won the elections in the Palestinian Authority the international community – the Quartet – including the European Union,

decided that the way to get legitimacy from the international community is to meet the requirements: to accept the right of Israel to exist, to accept the former agreements between Israel and the Palestinians and of course, to renounce violence and terrorism.
These requirements are not obstacles on the way towards peace; these are crucial elements on the way towards peace, because, any kind of idea of a two state solution is based on recognizing the other's right to live, accepting former agreements and, of course, to renounce violence and terrorism. So we believe that the right thing to do, after the internal agreement between the different Palestinian factions in Mecca, is to stick to the decisions that the European Union made, and the meaning of sticking to the requirements, is to demand – as it was said – that any Palestinian government meet these requirements, fully and completely.
Now, of course, everybody is hopeful and we do not want to lose hope either. We would like to see a change, but it is also important to understand that only determination by the international community can change the situation on the ground. Because Hamas, which is a terrorist movement – a designated terrorist organization – can change only if they understand that the policy of the international community is to embrace the moderates – to support and to strengthen the moderates, while delegitimizing, or keeping the pressure on the extremists and the terrorists.
This is the only way that, maybe, we can see a change on the ground and we can create a better future for generations to come in the Middle East. So compromise is something that will not help, it is against the interest of the moderates, including, if I may say, the interest of the moderates among the Palestinians.
When it comes to Ahmed Ahmadinejad, I think that a leader who denies the Holocaust, who calls for the Jews to go back to Europe, who talks about his vision of wiping Israel – a state – off the map – a state which is Israel, which is my home – should not be accepted as a member of the international community. Now he is being received in Saudi Arabia, and last year, and only a few months ago, he was received in the United Nations. The United Nations is an organization that was formed after the Second World War, on the understanding of "never again". So, even if we set aside his horrific ideas, plus the idea of trying to get the weapons to do so, I think that this kind of statement is unacceptable and I think that it is important that he understands that the international community is not going to live with this kind of statement. And this is, of course, in addition to the need to stop his nuclear program to get the weapons to implement these horrific ideas.
I would like to say something else. I know that Iran is not only a threat to Israel, and these kind[s] of statements are not only the business of Israel. It is about the international community, it is about the international community's values; it is about the way the free world would like to promote, or to live with its own values.
Q: Just to follow up of those questions, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, what concerns do you have that, perhaps some countries in the European Union might be over eager to resume some sort of direct aid to the Palestinian Authority before the as yet unformed unity government complies with all of the conditions?
FM Livni: You know, I can understand the eagerness to see a process. Believe me, there is no one more than the Israelis who would like to see a peace process and the end of the conflict, but the real question is what is the best way to achieve this goal.
I do believe that compromising with terror is something that will not lead to a process – or to a real process – of ending the conflict. It will lead to more terror – to an understanding by these terrorist organizations that they can win legitimacy without any kind of compromise on their side. So our expectations from the international community is to stick to their own demands, to keep the pressure on the terrorists and on the extremists, while working with the moderates. This is the only way that we have. This was our policy before the Mecca agreement, and I think that this is the right thing to do.
The international community is being watched by all the extremists, not only by Hamas. Nobody wants the Hamas to win, not only in Israel; this is a threat to the moderate Palestinians, and to other moderate states in the region whose leadership faces other radical elements like Hamas. So I believe this is the mutual interest of the international community. I hope also that European member states understand that this is not a zero sum game in which supporting Israel means being

against the Palestinians – not any more. Supporting the moderates, meaning supporting the three requirements, supporting Israel, plus the moderates among the Palestinians, plus some other moderates of Moslem and Arab states – this is the real situation and if this is understood, I am sure that Europe will stick to the requirements.
Q: Still on the subject of the new government: There are many that are saying, not only among the Palestinians but even among the Europeans that in the Mecca agreement, it is clearly stated that the whole previous agreement, signed by the PLO are accepted and these agreements already include clear acceptance for Israel and there is also reference to the exchange of letters between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Rabin, so why can you not also accept this? Do you want to have clear and new declaration of that, although this agreement already implicitly accepts Israel?
FM Livni: The three requirements are clear and simple. Recognition of the right of Israel to exist – it is so simple, it is so existential, I mean, it is part of the way we see our role. We understand that the Palestinian needs their own horizons. So you said, and so we say that the vision of the two state solution is part of our vision and they have the right to a state of their own. We are talking about a political movement which is based on religious, ideological ideas that cannot accept the right of Israel, or of Jews, or of others to live in the Middle East. It is not a political movement which is based on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And it is crucial – and I think that this is something basic – to ask them to say publicly that Israel has the right to exist.
When it comes to former agreements, these requirements are not negotiable, and I will explain why. The right of Israel to exist is not negotiable. What kind of agreement can we reach in negotiating our right to exist? If we say that we have the right to exist for the next ten years, twenty years – what kind of negotiations can we make on our right to live?
And the other is former agreements. Former agreements are the result of tough negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Nobody should be in love with all of the articles of the former agreements; even in Israel you can find people who say that maybe the agreements could have been different. But they were signed by an Israeli government and by an authorized organ of the Palestinians, and they should be respected fully and completely.
And the third one is to renounce violence and terrorism. Israel is being attacked on a daily basis. So, this is the only basis for future negotiations and future development between the Israelis and the Palestinians. If somebody wants to say that he wants to compromise on the requirements, then I wish it would be possible to say something like: in accordance with the Palestinian national interests, we will accept the agreements or something like that. Something that hints that they will accept only that part of the agreement which reflects the Palestinian interest – this is not in accordance and it does not comply with the requirements.
I can assure you that even the Palestinians are not suggesting that it meets their requirements; not even the Hamas members, or the Hamas leaders. They do not say that the meaning of the Mecca agreement is that they meet or that they intend to meet the requirements. So, these basic requirements should be met completely, clearly and fully.
Q: Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, if now the unity government did adopt all the conditions of the Quartet, would you recognize this government; will you work with them as a real partner, including the members of Hamas and the prime minister? And I would like to ask the President and the Commissioner if now the unity government will accept all the conditions, will you start working with them immediately, or will you take a long time to start working with them?
FM Livni: I would like to say that we are not playing games. For us the fact that the Hamas won the elections is not an excuse not to promote a process. For us this is a reality. I can say clearly that if a future Palestinian government meets the requirements, fully and completely, it will be legitimized also by Israel. We are looking at the government as an organ, a complete organ, and we will look into the guidelines and the platform of the government to see whether the government, as a whole, meets the requirements. It is so simple.
FM Steinmeier: [Translation] On behalf of the European Union, at least the Presidency, all I can say is to refer you to the three criteria. They did not come out of the blue. They are not an end in themselves either; they were a part of the

Roadmap. They have been repeated and reworked now as the Middle East Quartet criteria. We stated our expectations and if they achieve something, if they mean that a future Palestinian government gives a clear consent to these three criteria, then there is no obstacle to cooperation with such a government. . I cannot tell how long it would take to put the instruments in place, but perhaps Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner can elaborate.
Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner: You know very well our position; you know that we said at this very moment we cannot judge, because we do not yet see either a program or actions of a national unity government. First it has to be formed, and then we have to see, of course, what the actions, the declarations, what the program will be.
We already have started thinking about some preliminary ideas that could be there, on the one hand. But on the other hand, maybe saying what more can be done on governance, on institution building, maybe on the questions of economic development and of course, free movement of people and goods. This is preliminary thinking. Some things could be done even if such a national unity government would not respond to the Quartet principles, but many more things could be done if this were the case.
Now I think that have to use these moments and wait, but start already the concrete action on it.

[102] Giora Eiland: Renewed Negotiations with Syria: Currently Not in Israel's Interest, in "Strategic Assessment" vol. 9(March 4, 2007)4:
I am among those who believe that a political settlement is a good thing. Rafael (Raful) Eitan was once asked if he supported a peace settlement between Israel and Syria based on the principle of land for peace, and he said, "Certainly. If they give us more land, I will be happy to go toward them in peace. . . "
A peace treaty is better than a situation without peace. It is certainly better than war, but one must determine what kind of peace is offered versus the alternatives. In fact, doesn't the peace agreement on the Syrian agenda create a reality that is liable to lead to war more quickly than the absence of an agreement?
One of the issues most commonly raised in Israeli public discourse is: is Basher Asad serious? is he interested? is he willing? This is followed by: is he capable? These are important questions, but not the most important ones. The most important question is: what do we want? Answering this question requires a brief look at Israel's interests in this situation compared with other alternatives. My conclusion differs from the common assumption that if Asad is serious we should initiate peace talks with Syria.
There are five reasons why Israel should not engage now in negotiations with Syria over a peace treaty similar to the one discussed seven years ago, and especially if there are chances that the negotiations might succeed.
What the Agreement Lacks
The first reason concerns what cannot be obtained through an Israeli-Syrian peace settlement. First, a treaty with Syria will not remove the Iranian threat, which is mainly a nuclear threat. Syria needs Iran but Iran does not need Syria, and certainly not on the nuclear issue. Whether or not Iran pursues its nuclear ambitions depends on matters in which Syria plays practically no part or none at all. Thus, this threat is talked about – with some justification – as a viable and growing threat, and it will continue irrespective of a peace treaty with Syria or lack thereof.
A peace treaty with Syria does not solve the Palestinian problem. The dispute between Israel and Syria is ultimately a territorial dispute between two countries. There are dozens of such disputes around the world. Some have been going on for decades and even centuries. There are conflicts that are solved, some that are not solved, and some will never be settled.
Not only would a solution to the Israeli-Syrian conflict not help solve Israel's problem with the Palestinians; it even exacerbates almost every aspect of the problem. If Israel advances on one axis, it is unlikely to be able to advance on another. Yet to the Palestinians, a resolution of the Syrian dispute would be a kind of slap in the face and would likely prompt a new and growing intifada. In addition, if there were any thoughts of reaching a peace agreement at some time with the Palestinians based on borders that are not identical to the June 4, 1967 borders, reaching an agreement with the Syrians that validates the borders of June 4, 1967

will make it very difficult to effect the changes needed in a resolution with the Palestinians.
A peace treaty with Syria will not solve the problem of Lebanon, and herein lies the big difference from the past. Had Israel reached a peace settlement with Syria six or seven years ago, it could have done so with Lebanon as well. As such, the Lebanese would have been forced – together with Hizbollah – to swallow the bitter pill and agree to a Syrian dictate, including disarmament of Hizbollah. That was then, while Syria was in control in Lebanon. Today the situation is different. Now Israel could reach a peace agreement with Syria without its impacting in any way – and certainly not decisively – on the situation in Lebanon. The Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon bolstered Hizbollah and reinforced Iranian intervention in Lebanon. Thus, if there is a peace treaty with Syria, Hizbollah will remain unaffected, and the Lebanese problem will be aggravated.
Peace with Syria will not lead to any comprehensive agreement vis-à-vis Israel's relations with the Arab world, as the root of the hostility between Israel and the Arab states that have not signed a peace treaty with Israel is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Thus if this problem is not solved, another peace treaty with an additional country – Syria – will at best be like the treaty with Jordan; in other words it will not impact measurably and certainly not solve any significant problem.
Finally, an agreement would not solve the problem of Israel's standing in the world, as in this area as well, a kind of myth has evolved, namely, the real problem is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a treaty with one more country will not enhance Israel's international standing at all.
These five interests will not be achieved or advanced through a peace agreement with Syria. It remains to be seen, therefore, whether the give and take of direct negotiations with Syria is in Israel's interest. In this context, there are four more reasons why Israel does not currently have any interest in peace talks with Syria.
The American Factor
Of lesser importance though not irrelevant is the fact that right now, the United States has no interest in encouraging a peace treaty between Israel and Syria. This is a secondary consideration, since if peace with Syria had immediate value for Israel, Israel would try to persuade the US to change its mind on the matter. But as of now, the clear American approach – both the official approach and the behind-the-scenes one – is that the United States has no interest in Israel arriving at a peace agreement with Syria. Would it be right to "confront" America over this particular issue? And if so, would an agreement with Syria earn us all the potential America rewards, compared with the benefits bestowed by the United States following agreements it was eager to promote?
The Agreement's Lifespan
At issue is the potential stability of such an agreement and what would happen if it did not last. Syria is a minority-ruled country. The minority is the Alawi sect, which comprises only 14 percent of the country's population and is looked upon by the Sunni majority as inferior and not genuinely Muslim. In a situation of this sort there is no certainty with regard to the fate of such a treaty once the rule of the country is removed from the Alawis. Since Basher Asad assumed the presidency, two main factors have kept the Alawi minority in power. The first is the support of Iran, though this could be withdrawn at any point. This support is not only military and political, but also of a religious nature in the sense that the Shiite establishment in Iran recognizes the Alawis as legitimate Muslims and therefore does not challenge the Islamic authenticity of the regime.
The second factor is that Syria is ruled by an emergency regime that enables the government to intervene anywhere where there is commercial, financial, or political activity. All this is based on the argument that an Israeli attack is expected and that emergency laws are essential for defense of the country. Once there is peace between Israel and Syria and thousands of Israeli tourists begin swarming into Syria, this argument will no longer be relevant. The Sunni majority, with a considerable degree of justification, will demand its share of power and will ultimately assume control in Syria.
The Sunnis' strength will increase dramatically with the collapse of their great enemy, the Alawi regime. There is no guarantee that a Sunni government of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria would honor a peace treaty signed by "the non-

legitimate heretics of the Alawi minority." In other words, Israel may sign a peace treaty whereby the chances of its longevity are highly doubtful.

Security Issues

Even if it is possible to reach a security agreement between Israel and Syria, I believe such an agreement would be unreasonable, and I would even define it is as dangerous. There are two explanations for this: the deterrence concept, and erosion of capabilities and deterrence.

What is deterrence? What is the model of the security agreement? The model is based on the sufficient eastward withdrawal of the Syrian tanks. If Syria decided to breach the peace treaty and move its tanks to the Golan Heights, Israel would have sufficient time to dispatch its forces, which would be stationed to the west of the Jordan River, and be able to repossess the Golan Heights. This would mean that the battle between Israel and the Syrians would once again take place on the Golan Heights. However, this approach is based on four assumptions that are problematic at best, if not outright unlikely.

The Syrians will adhere religiously to the agreement and the demilitarization and will not undermine the treaty. This seems to me highly unlikely, if not impossible.

If there is any Syrian movement or there is a Syrian decision to engage in military action, Israel's intelligence will identify and interpret this correctly. The world, including the Middle East, has witnessed dozens of examples of intelligence errors in understanding the other side's intentions. This is aggravated by an element of deceit, whereby the other sides tries to "convince" you that the real story is otherwise. It is very risky to formulate a security concept on faith in perfect intelligence.

The Israeli government, as soon as it identifies any intention of war, will make the right decisions, including mobilizing the reserve forces and instructing the IDF to move into Syrian territory on the Golan Heights. The "game" between us and the Syrians is not balanced. The Golan Heights can be demilitarized on both sides, but it would be Syrian. Entry there by the Syrian army would only be an infringement of a treaty; Israeli entry there would a declaration of war. Thus, taking such a decision quickly and in real time is problematic.

Israel can comfortably contend with a new military reality on the Golan Heights. In fact, the relatively simple current reality (an area that is mostly uninhabited, without irrigation channels and other "civilian obstacles") would probably change and the military difficulties would increase accordingly.

Any peace agreement will naturally impact on capabilities and deterrence. Assume that the terms of the settlement in question are the same ones we would have reached in 2000. This settlement offers a solution for one security problem but does not solve two far more serious security problems. The settlement provides a solution for the issue of Syrian tanks. Assume that the Syrian tanks will move back to an adequate point, and that deterrence – despite its four (problematic) assumptions – will be maintained. Even this optimistic scenario does not solve the two more serious problems.

The first is the arsenal of surface-to-surface missiles in Syria, including missiles with chemical capabilities that can strike any location in Israel. The second is that as soon as the Syrians control the whole of the Golan Heights, a large number of towns like Bint Jbail will be established along the Jordan River. This will enable them to maintain many "civilian" soldiers with advanced anti-tank or anti-aircraft weapons. No demilitarization will be able to supervise such a development. Then, even if Israel succeeds in maintaining deterrence and had enough time to take the Golan Heights (before the Syrian tanks get there), it would have to break through a line of towns like Bint Jbail built along the Jordan River. There is no appropriate military answer to this situation, and again, a demilitarization settlement does not provide a total solution.

In terms of security, agreeing to such a treaty would mean taking an unreasonable risk unless Israel changes its security concept relating to warfare on the Golan Heights. This means that from now on, Israel understands that should war break out with Syria it will not be waged along the Golan Heights ridge and eastward; rather, it would start from the Jordan River and proceed towards Safed and Tiberias, "and we will somehow manage."

While it is true that Israel encountered this challenge in 1948 and 1967, I would not advise revisiting this situation a third time. Today Israel's security concept vis-a-vis

Syria is based on the fact that as long as the IDF is stationed on the Golan Heights, the military result will be attained through Israel's ability to create an immediate threat to governmental assets, including IDF forces reaching Damascus. As the Syrians are aware of this, an effective deterrence has been maintained over the years.
Israel's solution to the Syrian threat, including the threat of surface-to-surface missiles and non-conventional weapons, is thedeterrence capability, meaning that the Syrians are aware of the price its government is liable to pay if its starts a war. When the military reality changes, Syria's temptation to attack will increase.
A stable reality, with or without a treaty, is maintained (particularly in the Middle East) only when the cost of breaching it is greater than the expected benefit. It is not maintained only because there is an agreement or because there is international supervision. I do not see how such a mechanism can be generated if Israel withdraws from the Golan Heights.
The Ethos
Ethos is also a subject that should be addressed. The question is in what sort of country we in Israel want to live. Israel may be able to reach a peace agreement, and assume that solutions can be found on the Golan Heights and elsewhere. The question is whether we want to live in a country that within thirty or forty years will be full of concrete, with all that that entails.
The Israeli people have a genuine need to live in an area with space, views, water, and agriculture and, yes, rich in Jewish history.
In this respect the Golan Heights is more than a security requirement. It is part of the ethos of the Israeli and there is no need to apologize for it. I was asked about this in a radio interview: "Wait a minute, so what are you saying?" the interviewer asked me, "are we doomed to stay on the Golan Heights forever?" – as if we were talking about some form of punishment.
What Then?
These five reasons indicate to me that even if there are seemingly positive conditions, in the sense that Basher Asad is willing and possibly able, it would not be right to reach a peace agreement based on such substantive, tangible Israeli concessions for such poor returns.
At this point, the necessary question is: Will Israel be in this situation forever? And does this eternity likely guarantee more wars? The answer goes beyond the issue addressed here and touches on the general challenge of settling the Israeli-Arab conflict – and whether it can be solved only in accordance with the Arab dogma whereby Israel returns all the occupied territories in return for peace. In other words, there can only be peace if Israel gives up all the territories and returns to the 1967 borders. I think this is the wrong narrative.
This incorrect version is not ours. Unlike others, I do not believe that this is or has to be the only narrative.
Postscript: The Lebanon Issue
My last point concerns the issue of Lebanon. It seems that one of the parameters that has changed in the last seven years, even if there is disagreement over other aspects to the argument presented here, is Syria's ability to compel Lebanon, all its forces there notwithstanding, to honor an agreement between Syria and Israel.
About two and half to three years ago there was debate in Israel about whether Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon was a positive development. The decided position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was that it was good for Israel that the Syrians leave Lebanon. This position was adopted by Prime Minister Sharon and became official policy.
There were others who thought differently. It wasn't as if Israel was the main factor and certainly other parties decided on Syria's withdrawal of its forces from Lebanon, but Israel undoubtedly encouraged them as much as it could. I believe that was a serious historic error. It would have been better for Israel had Syria remained in Lebanon. The Syrian interest in Lebanon was at least on a par with its interest in the Golan Heights. It would have better for the Syrians to be engaged in maintaining their assets in Lebanon. Now, having lost them, what remains is to fight for the next asset – the Golan Heights.
There is another issue here, and I will inject a personal angle at this point. I did not participate in any negotiations with Syria, but I was part of the team that, as a secondary effort, prepared a possible treaty between Israel and Lebanon. In other

words, in 2000, talks were progressing with Syria at the same time that a draft of a treaty with Lebanon was being prepared. At the time I was head of the IDF's Operations Branch, which addressed the security implications. The position was approved by the political leadership. We believed that Syrian presence in Lebanon was referred, or at least, Israel had no interest in insisting on the opposite. We said: as long as the status quo in Lebanon is maintained and the Syrians stay there and move no further south and do not introduce their air force or missiles, the situation is tolerable end even desirable.
Syria's withdrawal about two years ago started a process that is, of course, bad for the Syrians. However, this does not necessarily mean it is good for us. This shows that when it comes to interests, there are sometimes strange convergences. The withdrawal of the Syrians from Lebanon did not match Syria's interest or Israel's. The sum-zero thinking that if it is bad for our enemies it is good for us is not necessarily correct. Israel's enthusiasm two years ago in encouraging the Americans, the French, and the UN to pressure the Syrians to withdraw from Lebanon was a mistake.

[103] Saudi Arabia to support any Arab decision on peace plan: Saud Arab News. 05.03.2007:
Saudi Arabia said yesterday that it would support any Arab decision to change or develop the Arab peace plan, which was passed by the Arab League summit that was held in Beirut in 2002.
"The peace plan is the property of Arabs, not Saudi Arabia. If they want to change or develop it, it's totally an Arab decision," Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal told reporters here.
Referring to Libya's decision not to attend the Arab summit in Riyadh following a change in the conference venue, Saud said, "It is the discretion of the host country to decide whether the summit be held in Arab League headquarters or in its country."
He said Saudi Arabia had never considered Iran as an enemy. "If the Kingdom had considered Iran its enemy, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah would not have received President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad in Riyadh." However, he advised Tehran to avoid confrontation with the US to reinforce the stability of the region.
Earlier, the Libyan foreign minister had said that Libya won't attend the upcoming Arab summit in Saudi Arabia, adding that the Arab world "is not serious" and that "joint Arab action is dysfunctional."
"Arab joint action is marred by disorder," Libyan Foreign Minister Abdel-Rahman Shalqam said at Arab League headquarters in Cairo yesterday. "Libya is insisting on a real Arab mechanism – not policies of axes, groups and unilateral changes to decisions," an angry Shalqam said.
Arab foreign ministers convened yesterday to prepare the agenda for the summit, which is scheduled for March 28-29 in the Saudi capital Riyadh.
Late Saturday, Shalqam announced that his country's "seat at the summit will be vacant." Libya will not attend due to "procedural errors," he said.
Shalqam disputed that the shift of summit venue from the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh to Saudi Arabia had been done according to Arab League procedures. The 2006 summit had agreed that the 2007 gathering would be held in Egypt after Saudi Arabia, which chairs the summit in 2007, had requested this.
But in January, Saudi Arabia asked that the event be held in Riyadh. "Our relations with Saudi are brotherly and good," Shalqam told reporters yesterday. "But the Arab world is not serious," he said criticizing the way Arab countries manage their political affairs.
"Iran has become the enemy (of Arab countries) – not Israel. What nonsense this is," Shalqam added.

[104] Der Text des Beiruter Friedensplans findet sich in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente" dieser Homepage.

[105] Aluf Benn and Amiram Barkat: Livni: Israel can't accept Arab peace plan in current form, in "Haaretz" 01.03.2007:

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told a Palestinian newspaper in an interview published Thursday that Israel could not accept a 2002 Arab League peace initiative in its current formulation.
In her first interview to the Palestinian media, Livni told Al-Ayyam that Israel's stance on the new Palestinian unity government would be determined by on its diplomatic plan. She also said the Israeli stance would depend on the extent to which the new government meets the three demands of the Quartet.
The foursome of international peace brokers – the United States, United Nations, Russia and the European Union – has demanded that the PA government recognize Israel, renounce violence and abide by previously signed peace agreements in order to lift the sanctions imposed in the wake of the 2006 Hamas election victory.
"We are demanding that the government meet these three conditions," Livni stressed. The Arab initiative, drafted at a March 2002 meeting of the Arab League in Beirut, calls for the full normalization of ties between Israel and the Arab world in return for a complete Israeli withdrawal from all lands captured in the 1967 Six-Day War. …

[106] Adalah proposes draft democratic constitution for a multicultural state of Israel, 28.02.2007:
On the tenth anniversary of its founding, Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel issues `The Democratic Constitution,` as a constitutional proposal for the state of Israel based on the concept of a democratic, bilingual, multicultural state. This proposed constitution draws on universal principles and international conventions on human rights, the experiences of nations and the constitutions of various democratic states. The following is the introductory chapter to the draft constitution:

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which enshrined the human rights lessons of the evils committed during World War II, and the international human rights covenants, which were subsequently ratified, state that: All human beings are equal; anti-discrimination is an absolute principle which cannot be compromised; all peoples have the right of self-determination; no nation possesses rights that are superior to those of another nation; and it is essential to ensure the personal liberty and economic and social rights of the individual for freedom, equality and justice to be achieved.
2. After the end of World War II, and as a result of their long and just struggle against colonial regimes, many nations succeeded to attain their independence and realize their right of self-determination. In the last two decades, historic processes have taken place in states where policies of repression and discrimination had reigned. The end of the apartheid regime in South Africa is the most prominent example. These states have derived lessons from the past and promoted historic reconciliation, based on recognition of the historical injustice these policies inflicted on groups that were repressed and discriminated against, and ensured the effective participation of these groups in the process of constitution-making.
3. Based on universal principles, international human rights covenants and the experience of nations, we – as a human rights organization – seek to propose a constitution, which contains provisions on the governing regime and on rights and liberties, as detailed below. We believe this constitutional proposal should be incorporated in the laws and/or the future constitution of the State of Israel.
4. In order to build an equal and democratic society, free of repression and violence, and as a basis for historic reconciliation between the State of Israel and the Palestinian people and the entire Arab nation, the State of Israel must recognize its responsibility for past injustices suffered by the Palestinian people, both before and after its establishment. The State of Israel must recognize, therefore, its responsibility for the injustices of the Nakba and the Occupation; recognize the right of return of the Palestinian refugees based on UN Resolution 194; recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination; and withdraw from all of the territories occupied in 1967.
5. The Palestinian Arab citizens of the State of Israel have lived in their homeland for innumerable generations. Here they were born, here their historic roots have grown, and here their national and cultural life has developed and flourished. They are

active contributors to human history and culture as part of the Arab and Islamic nations and as an inseparable part of the Palestinian people.
6. Since their political status has been changed against their will, making them a minority in their homeland; since they have not relinquished their national identity; and since the rights of a homeland minority must include, inter alia, those rights which should have been preserved and developed as much as possible had they not become a minority in their homeland, thus, the legal starting point of this constitutional proposal is: The Arab citizens in the State of Israel are a homeland minority.
7. The policies and practices of Israeli governments have caused severe injustice to the Palestinian Arab minority since 1948, some of which continues today, including this minority`s physical detachment from its people and nation, the uprooting and destruction of villages, the demolition of homes, the imposition of military rule until 1966, the massacre of Kufr Qassem in 1956, the killing of young people during the first Land Day in 1976 and in mass protests of October 2000, the confiscation of properties from the Muslim Waqf, the expropriation of land, the non-recognition of Arab villages, the separation of families, policies of institutional discrimination in all fields of life, and the exclusion of the Arab minority based on the definition of the state as Jewish. Therefore, the following constitutional proposal determines that the basic rights of the Arab minority include: the return of land and properties on the basis of restorative justice, effective participation in decision-making, the fulfillment of the right to cultural autonomy and the recognition of the Arabic language as an official language in the State of Israel.
8. The dignity and personal liberty of the individual constitute the basis for maintaining a society founded on human rights. However, the realization of these rights is conditional upon the existence of a society based on equality. Therefore, this constitutional proposal determines the duty to guarantee and protect the economic and social rights of all residents and citizens, especially the most needy.
9. In a state that does not control or occupy another people and that is based on full equality between all of its residents and between all of the different groups within it, Jewish and Arab citizens shall respect each other`s rights to live in peace, dignity and equality, and will be united in recognizing and respecting the differences between them, as well as the differences that exist between all the groups in a democratic, bilingual and multicultural state.

[107] Open Letter on the occasion of the Association Council between EU and Israel, 27.02.2007:

Dear Ministers,
Dear High Representative,
Dear Commissioner,

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) expresses concern about the situation of human rights in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). It is our hope that the European Union will take this letter into account in view of the meeting of the Association Council between the European Union (EU) and Israel, to be held on 5 March 2007.

As a network of more than 80 human rights NGOs based in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, we have monitored and condemned violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the past months and years. Therefore we welcome initiatives for a political dialogue between the conflicting parties.

We would like to remind of the responsibility of the international community, and especially the EU, towards a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law. This is part of the obligations of all UN members as well as the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, and was confirmed by the International court of Justice Advisory Opinion on “Legal Consequences of The Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” rendered on 9 July 2004. For the EU and its Member States, the EU Association Agreement with Israel and the interim Association Agreement with the Palestinian Authority place the protection of human rights at the centre of the relationship.

It is our great common concern that all efforts, including any initiative started or supported by the EU or its Member States, are not in conflict with international law. Furthermore, we would like to emphasise that this body of international law must be

applied not only to processes aimed at achieving a peaceful, durable and just solution by the parties, but also during the ongoing conflict.
We are deeply convinced that a peaceful, durable and just solution in the Middle East cannot be reached outside the framework of the protections afforded under international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law. Fostering and defending international human rights now and in a future political solution to the conflict would, at the same time indispensably support democracy and the rule of law in the region. Failures to protect human rights can only play into the hands of national or religious extremists.
We are concerned about the economic sanctions against the Palestinian National Authority since March 2006. In light of our monitoring of the human rights conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), we believe that the sanctions have had grave implications on the human rights of the Palestinian civilian population. Some of these have long-term, possibly irreversible, effects. We therefore call upon the EU to review its decisions concerning these sanctions, which have proven to be counterproductive as they primarily punish the civilian population and contribute to spreading poverty and radicalism in OPT.
The EU's Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) does not present a solution. It is rather an extension to the prolonged practice of providing humanitarian aid whereas the only sustainable solution would be to eradicate the sources of violations.
Additionally, in light of the effects of Israel's systematic discriminatory treatment of its Palestinian Arab citizens, the EU should ensure that the commitments included in the EU/Israel Action Plan in this regard are respected. For instance, the jointly agreed action 'to promote and protect rights of minorities, including enhancing political, economic, social and cultural opportunities for all citizens and lawful residents'. The EU should therefore take steps to ensure that its cooperation with Israel is contingent on Israel making moves to end all discriminatory state practice and rectifying its effects.
We have identified the following key areas of conflict to which the international standards of human rights and humanitarian law must be fully applied:
– Restrictions of movement of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,
– he humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip,
– The Wall, most of which is built inside the OTP,
– Torture and ill treatment of Palestinians in interrogation and detention by the Israeli authorities,
– Settler violence against the Palestinian population in the West Bank.
– The continued expansion of Israeli settlements and infrastructure in the West Bank.
Long term issues within the framework of a political solution to the conflict in the region:
– End of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory (the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem) since 1967 and the right of Palestinians to self-determination,
– The dismantling of Israeli settlements on occupied territory, prohibition of annexation of land, including the construction of the wall on occupied territory,
– The recognition of the plight of Palestinian refugees and an agreement by all parties on a just and durable solution to this issue that would be acceptable to all sides, and
– The right of all people[s] of the region to the right set in international law and conventions, with an emphasis on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Convention against Torture, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
Defending and fostering human rights successfully, as in our mandate, cannot be reached without the active support of the international community on all levels.
We are looking for a more active role on the part of the EU in the building of a peaceful, durable and just solution to the conflict. We ask the EU to implement and activate relevant EU instruments and initiatives, such as the Association Agreement and the European Neighbourhood Policy's Action Plan that both stress the importance of respect for international law and human rights.
We trust that the concerns expressed in this letter will receive the attention they deserve.
Yours faithfully,

Kamel Jendoubi, EMHRN President
Marita Roos, EMHRN Coordinator in Copenhagen
Sandrine Grenier, Representative in Brussels

[108] Mash'al: The key to the Palestinian issue is Israeli recognition of Palestinian rights, 25.02.2007:
Bethlehem – Ma'an – Head of the Hamas political bureau, Khalid Mash'al, has declared that the key to any solution to the Palestinian issue is Israeli recognition of Palestinian rights; to withdraw from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and comply with Palestinian demands.
Speaking to the London based daily, Al Sharq Al Awsat, during his visit to Egypt; Mash'al added that the Saudi king is trying to preserve Palestinian blood.
Mash'al expects the Mecca agreement to be successful for a period of time, as long as the Saudis and Egyptians are supporting it. He said that the deal did not cover or achieve everything. He denied that there is a Saudi initiative to improve relations between Hamas and Jordan.
The paper asked Mash'al about the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, meeting with Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, he said "we don't care what the Israelis say, we made an agreement in Mecca and we will stick to it, despite the challenges we are going to face." Mash'al added "Israel should recognize Palestinian rights and withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza Strip."
Mash'al also said "we have agreed in Mecca that external negotiations should be the responsibility of the Palestine Liberation Organisation chairman [Abbas] and when he is offered any settlements he should present them to the legislative institutions."
When Mash'al was asked about his expectations of the Quartet (the United Nations, United States, European Union and Russia) meeting with United States secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, he said "regardless of what the USA wants, I believe that there is a level of understanding among the Arabs and the Palestinians, this will give us the margin to move and become closer to national goals. The Arabs will be supporting the Palestinians and that satisfies me, as this will form an Arab unity which can protect the Palestinians."
With regard to the differences between Fatah and Hamas and to the political partnership he said "this subject will be dealt with seriously, we will discuss it and I believe that we will overcome any obstacles, there are many steps that we are going to take to reach a real partnership in the government."
About the internal fighting he said "we have made some mistakes and we courageously admit that, but these are limited and were committed as reactions, we don't feel proud of this and hope that it will be omitted from history, we are steadfastly against the shedding of Palestinian blood."
When asked about the United States categorising of Arab nations as 'moderate' and 'extremist' he said "our relationship with the Arab countries does not reflect this, we have maintained good relations with the Arab countries, regardless of how the USA portrays or classifies them."
With regards to the aid embargo on the Palestinian authority, he said "the Arabs can break it, at least partially, even if the US refuses to lift it, but we notice that there are cracks in the position of the Quartet and Russia takes a positive position, I am sure that the siege can be partially broken."
Mash'al concluded by saying "the Mecca deal will succeed and continue, it will be successful for a period of time because of the objective circumstances. I am convinced that the deal did not achieve all of our ambitions but at least it ended the internal fighting."

[109] Al-Haq's Intervention to Diplomatic Representatives Regarding the Travel Restrictions Imposed on Al-Haq's General Director, 22.02.2007:
As a Palestinian organisation dedicated to the protection and promotion of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Al-Haq would like to call your attention to the severe travel restrictions that have been imposed on its General Director, and longstanding human rights defender, Shawan Jabarin. Mr. Jabarin's case is illustrative of the numerous difficulties faced by human rights defenders who volunteer or work with non-governmental organisations in the OPT.

On 23 March 2006, having unsuccessfully attempted to cross from the West Bank to Jordan via the Allenby Bridge, Mr. Jabarin was issued with an Israeli police order requesting that he present himself at the 'Atsion Liaison Office, between Bethlehem and Hebron, at noon on Sunday, March 26. On the specified day, Mr. Jabarin arrived at 'Atsion as requested and handed over his ID and the police order. After being forced to wait outside the compound's gate for four hours, Mr. Jabarin was informed that before he could be granted access he would have to lift up his shirt. After refusing to submit to this humiliating treatment, Mr. Jabarin was told by an Israeli official, "We have your ID and you can go home." Thus, Mr. Jabarin was forced to leave without proper identification or any kind of document attesting to the fact that his ID had been confiscated. Without his ID, Mr. Jabarin was prevented from travelling within the West Bank. This severely hindered his right to freedom of movement, enshrined in Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and consequently disrupted his professional duties and activities for Al-Haq. After repeated efforts to secure its return, Mr. Jabarin finally received his ID in July 2006 following an intervention by the Israeli human rights organisation HaMoked to the Israeli legal advisor's office.

Since the events described above, the Israeli authorities have refused to grant Mr. Jabarin permission to travel abroad. In October 2006, Mr. Jabarin's request to travel to a conference in Spain was refused. Similarly, Mr. Jabarin was denied authorisation to travel to Egypt to participate in a conference organised by Christian Aid from 10-15 December 2006. Mr. Jabarin's appeal against the latter refusal was rejected by the Israeli High Court, which upheld the ban on his travel, based on classified material shown in the presence of one side.

Israel's practices in regard to Mr. Jabarin violate his fundamental human rights. The Israeli authorities failed to provide Mr. Jabarin with any opportunity to challenge the exit prohibition prior to its coming into force. Also, the decision to prohibit Mr. Jabarin from leaving the OPT is all-encompassing and unlimited in time. It is not limited to a specific place, city or country, and fails to take into consideration the purpose of Mr. Jabarin's travels abroad, namely the promotion of human rights. It is worth noting that the Israeli authorities have allowed Mr. Jabarin's exit in the past. Since 1999, Mr. Jabarin has travelled abroad on eight separate occassions. Indeed, as recently as February 2006, the Israeli authorities twice permitted Mr. Jabarin's exit from the OPT. On one of those occassions, involving travel to a conference in Morocco, Mr. Jabarin's request was answered in the following terms: "according to the inspection we have conducted … we have no comments concerning permitting the above to exit … according to accepted procedures." Since then, there has been no change in circumstances that would justify Mr. Jabarin being prevented from travelling to participate in human rights activities outside of the OPT. Consequently, one must question the motives behind the denial of Mr. Jabarin's right to freedom of movement.

According to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights defenders, Hina Jilani, human rights defenders in the OPT operate under conditions that are absolutely incompatible with international norms and standards of human rights. One of the biggest obstacles to the work of human rights defenders in the OPT is restrictions on freedom of movement. In this regard, it should be noted that Mr. Jabarin's case is not an isolated incident. Several other human rights defenders have been prevented from travelling to participate in human rights activities outside of the OPT. It is submitted that these Israeli travel restrictions are aimed at preventing the revelation of human rights abuses by Israel, and are used against human rights defenders to deter the defence of human rights. Such restrictions infringe upon the rights of defenders to report human rights violations at the international level. They negatively impact upon the ability of human rights defenders to travel abroad to attend international conferences and other events that would strengthen their knowledge and skills and allow them to raise the issue of human rights abuses in the OPT before a wider audience. On an organisational level, they severely hinder Palestinian human rights organisations' capacity to use international networks to advocate for the respect of human rights in the OPT.

Human rights defenders play a vital role in promoting and striving for the protection and realisation of human rights at the national and international levels. In the context of Israel's almost 40-year-old occupation of the Palestinian territory, and the

continuing violations of the rights of the Palestinian population, any attempt to impede the ability of human rights defenders in the OPT to function cannot be tolerated. It is only through respecting human rights that a just and durable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be found. With this in mind, Al-Haq calls on you to intervene with the Israeli authorities on Mr. Jabarin's behalf, requesting that the prohibition on his travel abroad be lifted.

[110] Quartett Statement, Berlin, 21.02.2007:
The Quartet Principals – Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, High Representative for European Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner – met today in Berlin to discuss the situation in the Middle East.
Secretary Rice reported on her recent February 18 meetings with PM Olmert and President Abbas, the February 19 trilateral and U.S. efforts to facilitate discussions between the parties. The Quartet welcomed these efforts and expressed the hope that the result-oriented dialogue initiated between Israeli and Palestinian leaders will continue in the framework of a renewed political process, with the aim of defining more clearly the political horizon and launching meaningful negotiations. The Quartet reaffirmed its determination to promote such a process, in cooperation with the parties and other regional partners. The Quartet urged the parties to refrain from measures that prejudge issues to be resolved in negotiations.
The Quartet reaffirmed its statements regarding its support for a Palestinian government committed to nonviolence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap, and encouraged progress in this direction.
The Quartet discussed efforts underway for a Palestinian national unity government, pursuant to the agreement reached in Mecca on February 8. The Quartet expressed its appreciation for the role of King Abdallah of Saudi Arabia and the cessation of violence among Palestinians. The Quartet concluded with a discussion of possible further steps by the international community in the context of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.
It welcomed preliminary ideas put forward by the European Commission to meet the need to better coordinate and mobilize international assistance in support of the political process and to meet the needs of the Palestinian people.
The Quartet reaffirmed its commitment to meet regularly and asked envoys to monitor developments and actions taken by the parties and to discuss the way ahead. It was agreed to schedule a meeting in the region soon.

[111] Yossi Alpher. How to make the Saudi plan work, in "bitterlemons" 20.02.2007:
In recent months, Israel has increasingly recognized the interlocking nature of the multiple conflict zones--Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and the Israel-Arab conflict--that characterize today's Middle East. Not that one is the cause of the others, or that solving one will necessarily render the others easier to alleviate. Rather, the factor that links these conflicts is the expansion of radical Islam and the Iranian hegemonic drive, facilitated in part by disastrous American policies in the region. This has led Israelis as well as moderate Sunni Arabs to recognize that history has brought them together, however uncomfortably, on the same side of a broad regional confrontation. It has provoked the Saudi leadership to take unusual steps that contradict American policy: threatening to intervene on the side of the Iraqi Sunnis, and most recently brokering the Mecca unity government agreement between Hamas and Fateh.
Now Saudi King Abdullah is reportedly planning to use next month's Arab League summit as a vehicle for expanding and improving upon his 2002 comprehensive Arab-Israel peace initiative, which was approved by an earlier League summit in late March 2002. And justifiably so. The Arab League/Saudi peace plan with its comprehensive regional nature is increasingly emerging as a possible vehicle for dealing with the Arab-Israel conflict and thereby leveraging regional cooperation against Iran and radical Islam. Saudi leadership is welcome here, especially in view of the Bush administration's mistaken regional policies and lack of energetic commitment to Arab-Israel peace.

From Israel's standpoint, in order for the plan to be more appealing Saudi strategists should consider enhancing it in a number of ways.
First, the original plan demands that Israel return to the 1967 borders as a condition for peace. Yet even the late King Hussein of Jordan and the PLO's Yasser Arafat recognized that territorial swaps and compromises have over the years become necessary. The plan should recognize and accommodate this factor with regard to both the Palestinian and the Syrian peace fronts.
Second, the plan offers Israel peace, normal relations and--perhaps most important given present conditions in the region--"security for all the states of the region". But what does this mean? It would be very helpful to present Israel with a more detailed description of the mutual security arrangements the plan contemplates, as an incentive for territorial concessions that might otherwise endanger Israel.
Third, the plan calls for "a just solution of the Palestinian refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194". Back in March 2002 this was touted as an Arab concession, insofar as the plan recognizes the need for all sides to agree and does not demand the right of return (in fact, neither does 194 if read carefully in its original context). Yet that same Beirut Arab League summit that approved the plan then went on to pass three successive resolutions reaffirming its demand for the right of return, as if no significant change in Arab positions had just transpired. Israel, which would be committing national suicide if it accepted the right of return even at the symbolic level, needs to hear clarifications on this issue.
Particularly troublesome for Israel is the concluding operative paragraph of the 2002 plan, which calls upon the League secretary general to recruit support for it from the United Nations, the United States, Russia, the Muslim states and the European Union--everybody but Israel. The objective seemed to be to compel Israel to accept the plan without discussion, debate or negotiation. This approach has to change. The Saudis and the Arab League have to address Israel directly. They have to come to Jerusalem to present their revised plan to the government and public of Israel. If they do so in the tradition of Anwar Sadat and King Hussein, they will be amazed at how forthcoming the Israeli public can be.
Finally, the plan has to be broken down into workable stages and integrated into the new and threatening regional context. Israel can be asked to make the first move, but there must be Arab initiatives, too. And both sides need to perceive that there are incentives to progress toward Arab-Israel peace and regional security cooperation.
Phase I should involve two Israeli steps. First, discussions with the PLO to clarify the territorial and other parameters of a successful two-state solution. This corresponds with recent "diplomatic horizon" proposals made by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni for jump-starting the peace process. The Rice-Abbas-Olmert summit of Feb. 19 was a problematic beginning, but nonetheless a beginning.
In parallel, Jerusalem should enter into preliminary back-channel negotiations with Damascus concerning the possibility of bilateral peace talks that would satisfy Israel and the United States' (and the Arabs') needs regarding cessation of Syrian support for terrorism and strategic collaboration with Iran, if and as an Israeli-Syrian territories-for-peace deal is reached. This reflects the inclination of many within the Israeli security establishment to test President Bashar Assad's invitation to Israel to renew negotiations. If, however, the Saudis share American reservations about rewarding the problematic Assad with even exploratory talks at this juncture, then they should amend their peace plan accordingly, so that Israel is not held to a hypocritical regional peace standard.
Assuming one or both of these moves begin to generate momentum and lay the foundations for full-fledged negotiations, phase II would bring Israel together with the two "quartets" – the Saudi, Egyptian, Jordanian and Gulf leaderships along with the UN, US, EU and Russia--to begin discussing normalization of Israel-Arab relations, including security cooperation. Just as the Arab public wants to see progress toward Israel-Arab peace, the Israeli public needs to witness serious Arab gestures in the context of normalization and security cooperation against common enemies, and to be reassured that successful peace processes are rewarded by the Arab world.

Phase III witnesses Israeli-Palestinian and possibly Israeli-Syrian peace processes, either in parallel or in sequence, supported by international and Arab incentives and ultimately culminating in (phase IV) bilateral peace agreements and multilateral normalization and security coordination.
Whereas the first two phases could take six months to a year, phases III and IV would, in the best case, stretch out over years. Indeed, even to begin this process requires a degree of Israeli, Palestinian and American resolve and energy that appears to be sadly lacking. Yet the interactive nature of today's Middle East crises, and their gravity, demand nothing less than a major push for peace by the moderate Arab countries led by Riyadh.

[112] a) Statement After Meeting of Secretary Condoleezza Rice With Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Jerusalem, 19.02.2007:
U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert met today, February 19. It was a useful and productive meeting.
The leaders affirmed their commitment to a two-state solution, agreed that a Palestinian state cannot be born of violence and terror, and reiterated their acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap.
The President and the Prime Minister discussed how to move forward on mutual obligations in the Roadmap in regard to the implementation of Phase I.
The participants called for respecting the ceasefire declared in November.
The President and the Prime Minister also discussed issues arising from the agreement for a Palestinian national unity government, and the position of the Quartet that any Palestinian Authority government must be committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including regarding the Roadmap.
The President and the Prime Minister discussed their views of the diplomatic and political horizon and how it might unfold toward the two state vision of President Bush.
The President and the Prime Minister agreed that they would meet together again soon. They reiterated their desire for American participation and leadership in facilitating efforts to overcome obstacles, rally regional and international support, and move forward toward peace.
In that vein, Secretary Rice expects to return soon.

b) PM Olmert: "Any Palestinian Government That Arises Must Meet the International Community's Conditions." Communicated by the Prime Minister's Media Adviser), Excerpts, 19.02.07, at the Knesset:
"The meeting was divided into two parts. First, US Secretary of State Dr. Condoleeza Rice, Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abu Mazen and I met alone. Then we were joined by Foreign Minister Livni, Vice-Premier Shimon Peres and Defense Minister Amir Peretz. Senior PA officials – from Fatah, of course – joined on the Palestinian side. We made it clear, as simply and as plainly as possible, it being completely evident that our demand, like that of the international community and the US, is that a Palestinian government that accepts the Quartet principles thereby recognizes all of the agreements that have been signed between the state of Israel and the PA, and will carry them out.
This does not mean recognition via some sort of empty statement, but carrying out all of these agreements, recognizing the right of the State of Israel to exist as a Jewish state and, of course, an absolute halt to terrorism in all its expressions – Kassam fire and attempts to perpetrate other attacks. Moreover, it is clear that all other commitments – including that to release Gilad Shalit immediately – must be upheld.
I presented the foregoing at the meeting. I also added that we will not recognize any government that does not honor these commitments. Neither will we cooperate with it or its ministers. We decided, I decided, that in any case, but I also said so to the Cabinet and I think it reflects the views of all ministers that we must continue to keep a communications channel with the Palestinians. The only possible channel is PA President Abu Mazen, who was directly elected by the public and, therefore,

does not derive his authority from this or that agreement. His status is a result of elections by the Palestinian people. It was agreed contacts between us will continue and will mainly focus on improving the quality of life of Palestinians in the various areas and – of course – on the continuation in practice of the PA's war on terrorism in order to halt it completely.
I must say that the Americans made a great effort in order to cope with the complex reality in which we find ourselves in order to open a channel of communications between us and the Palestinians. I greatly appreciate and thank President Bush and also Secy. of State Rice, who met in the past days with Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Defense Minister Amir Peretz and myself. I am also thankful for the unambiguous position expressed by the US that it will not recognize a government which does not accept the Quartet principles. It is clear that this position helps the international community to form a common stance.
There will be discussions. We will continue the communications channel with Abu Mazen. We are not willing to create a situation in which no channels of communications exit with the Palestinian public. I think that would be a grave mistake.
Abu Mazen is different; therefore we will continue our contact with him. And we will make efforts also to attain a significant improvement in the quality of life of the Palestinians.
I thank our American friends, who are uncompromising in their values and continue to take interest in what happens here."

c) Kommentar – Reiner Bernstein: Jerusalem: Außer Spesen nichts gewesen (abgeschlossen am 20.02.2007):
Die Vorbedingungen beim Dreiertreffen in Jerusalem waren schon in der Planungsphase nicht gerade günstig. Ehud Olmert hatte klargestellt, dass er nicht gewillt sei, die zentralen Probleme des Konflikts zu diskutieren, Machmud Abbas' Autorität war durch die Vereinbarung mit „Hamas" in Mekka nicht gerade gestärkt worden, und Condoleezza Rice hatte zwar bekannt, dass sie nicht nur wegen schöner Fotos nach Jerusalem reisen werde, doch von präzisen Vorstellungen über die Zukunft der israelisch-palästinensischen Beziehungen war sie weit entfernt. Zudem konnte sie auf dem Weg von Bagdad nach Jerusalem aus Olmerts Mund vernehmen, dass er und George W. Bush in der Bewertung der Ergebnisse von Mekka vollkommen übereinstimmten. So verabschiedeten sich die drei nach zweistündigem Gespräch im „David Citadel Hotel" ohne eine gemeinsame Erklärung – und versprachen einander, sich bald wiederzusehen.
Jedes konstruktive Ergebnis hätte verwundert. Olmert ist nicht nur durch interne Skandale sowie durch divergierende Kräfte und persönliche Rivalitäten in seinem Kabinett geschwächt, sondern ihm fehlt auch der Wille zum politischen Durchbruch: Er erweist sich mehr denn je als Gefangener einer Ideologie, die zwar die Zweistaatenregelung im Munde führt, aber durch Mauerbau tief in der Westbank und Siedlungserweiterung das Gegenteil anpeilt. Israelische Kommentatoren fürchten seit langem, dass Olmert den Staat an die Wand fahren werde. Abbas kämpft um sein politisches Überleben, nachdem er durch die divergierenden Elemente in der palästinensischen Gesellschaft zermürbt worden ist. Die Vereinbarung mit „Hamas" dürfte nicht einmal eine Halbwertzeit erreichen. Worauf sich das Prestige der USA in der gesamten Region noch stützen will, ist eh ein Rätsel. Washingtons Option, zu Mitteln einer militärischen Konfrontation gegen Iran zu greifen, wäre nur der Schlusspunkt im Niedergang des Anspruchs auf weltpolitisch einzigartige Geltung. Wäre es anders, hätten Pjöngjang und Teheran längst einlenken müssen.
So wird sich die Spannung in Grenzen halten, mit der Rice gegenüber ihren „Quartett"-Kollegen in Berlin aufwarten kann. Moskau befindet sich auf dem Wege zu neuer regionaler und internationaler Bedeutsamkeit mit eigenen Vorstellungen auch im Nahen und Mittleren Osten. Jacques Chiracs und Tony Blairs Amtszeit nähert sich dem Ende, so dass ihre Handlungsfähigkeit kaum mehr ins Gewicht fällt. Die deutsche Bundesregierung hält sich bedeckt, obwohl sie sich als gegenwärtige EU-Präsidentschaft einiges zutrauen wollte. Doch von politischer Führung ist einstweilen weit und breit nichts zu erkennen. Wenn auch in diesen Tagen mit großer Regelmäßigkeit von notwendigen Konsultationen über den

Atlantik zu Rede ist, so versteckt sich dahinter nicht mehr und nicht weniger das Eingeständnis politischer Mutlosigkeit.
Also steht nichts anderes zu erwarten als die Fortsetzung des israelisch-palästinensischen Patts auf der Grundlage der tiefgreifenden Unebenbürtigkeit. Die drei vom „Quartett“ postulierten Prinzipien an „Hamas“ haben diese in die Hände von Khaled Meshal getrieben, der als Leiter der Politischen Abteilung der Islamischen Widerstandsbewegung mit Sitz in Damaskus und mit kapitalen Verbindungen nach Teheran ihre Delegation in Mekka leitete und den nominellen Ministerpräsidenten Ismail Haniyeh aufs Abstellgleis schob. Deshalb wird es gar nicht darauf ankommen, welche Ministerriege der wieder mit der Regierungsbildung beauftragte Haniyeh präsentiert – ob schon morgen oder erst in der vom palästinensischen Grundgesetz vorgegebenen Fünf-Wochen-Frist. Denn da eine „Regierung der nationalen Einheit“ ohne die in der palästinensischen Gesellschaft nach dem einstigen Vorbild von „Fatah“ breit verankerte „Hamas“ nicht zustande kommen kann, behält sie das Heft in der Hand. So kann sie mit einer gewissen Gelassenheit der Abbas’schen Drohung mit Neuwahlen entgegensehen. Der Vorwurf der Korruption und Günstlingswirtschaft hat zwar auch „Hamas“ erreicht, ohne dass ihr jedoch von der Mehrheit der Bevölkerung die Regierungsfähigkeit abgesprochen wird.
Was übrig bleibt, sind zwei Aspekte: Welche Rolle kann und will die sogenannte internationale Gemeinschaft zur Beilegung des Konflikts spielen? Nachdem es weder Kairo noch Riyadh gelungen ist, die palästinensischen Kontrahenten miteinander zu versöhnen, und nachdem die grundlegende Abkehr vom US-Unilateralismus in der Region wegen des einsetzenden Präsidentschaftswahlkampfes nicht erwartet werden kann, scheint diese Frage entschieden zu sein.
Ohne eine auf die nationale Koexistenz in Augenhöhe verpflichtete Annäherung zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern wird sich andererseits die Hypothese erledigen, dass der Druck Olmert/Livni und Abbas/Meshal dazu zwingen werde, das Ruder herumzureißen. Dazu bedürfte es allerdings israelischer Vorleistungen, die weit über das hinausgehen, was der Ministerpräsident jüngst zugesagt hat: die Lebensbedingungen der palästinensischen Bevölkerung zu erleichtern.

[113] Rice to Haaretz: This is not 1938, Iran is not Nazi Germany, in “Haaretz”-online 19.02.2007:
U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Sunday rejected any comparison between the international community's handling of Iran's nuclear program and its policy of appeasement toward Nazi Germany in 1938.
"I am fond of historical analogies, but not that fond," Rice told Haaretz in an interview, responding to a question about the analogy frequently cited by opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu.
However, she did lambaste Iran's behavior. "We clearly face a country that is pursuing policies in an assertive way that are contrary to the interests of the United States and are contrary to the interests of all people who want a peaceful Middle East," she said.
However, she did lambaste Iran's behavior. "We clearly face a country that is pursuing policies in an assertive way that are contrary to the interests of the United States and are contrary to the interests of all people who want a peaceful Middle East," she said.
In the interview, Rice said Israel's relationship with Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas should remain intact, as he is committed to the conditions set forth by the Quartet of Middle East mediators. She also lowered expectations for Monday's trilateral summit in Jerusalem, saying: "What I would consider a success tomorrow is that we have gotten started."
Steps to contain Iran
Referring to Iranian moves she said were contrary to a peaceful Mideast, Rice said "We are seeing [this] in Iraq, where the Iranians continue to support destabilizing activities, including the transfer of technologies that are killing our soldiers. We see it in Lebanon; we see it in the Palestinian territories. Unfortunately, Syria has decided to be Iran's sidecar in all of these activities ... [And] of course, the Iranians are seeking nuclear technologies that could lead to a nuclear weapon. This, with a

president in Iran who says things that should never be said by the president of any nation, that 'Israel should be wiped off the face of the map.'"
Rice detailed the steps that Washington has taken to contain Iran, including securing the unanimous passage of a UN Security Council resolution on sanctions, which "was a shock, I think, to the Iranians," sending an additional aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf, and
initiating various activities that target Iran's banking system and foreign investment in Iran.
Can we Israelis rest assured that it is not 1938?
Rice: "I can't speak to that historical analogy, but I can tell you that the one thing that we do know is that when the international community does not come together early to address aggressive behavior, that it never turns out well, and that's why it is important to address Iranian behavior now, not later."
Diplomatic horizons
"The two parties have not talked about a horizon for a very long time. And we have now the complications of being in an uncertain time, in an interim time before the Palestinian [unity] government is formed," Rice said in the interview with *Haaretz*, the day before her summit with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Abbas.
Rice said the dialogue with Abbas should continue, but also stressed that the new Palestinian unity government, in which his Fatah movement will participate, must abide by the Quartet's conditions – recognizing Israel, renouncing terror and honoring previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements – in order to obtain American recognition.
Although the Mecca Accord, which forms the basis for the new unity government, does not include these elements, Rice nevertheless justified her decision to go ahead with the summit. "There are people who said to me, 'Why don't you wait? Wait until the government is formed and then at least you will know what you are dealing with.' I said that I thought this was an especially important time to talk so that we can talk about what has happened and how we deal with the current situation, so that we can talk about the importance of continuing to make progress on some of the agreements that are already there."
"It is a complicated time, but as I said last night [Saturday], if I waited for an uncomplicated time in the Middle East, I am not sure I would ever get on an airplane," she said. "Even in this complicated time, it is important to deal with those Palestinians who do accept" the Quartet's conditions. Abbas, she noted, "not only accepts them, he just reiterated them a couple of days ago, and I think it is a good time to reiterate that that relationship is going to remain intact."
Asked whether the United States was surprised by the Mecca agreement, Rice said: "Well, we were continually saying to the Palestinian leadership that it was important for the Quartet principles to be respected. We are not going to make any judgments about whether or not this government will be a government that we can support or not, until we see the government and we see its program and we see what it says, but thus far I haven?t seen anything that suggests that it will be in accordance with the Quartet principles."
Are you disappointed with Abbas or with the Saudi king [under whose auspices the agreement was signed]?
"I think and fully understand that the desire to have peace among Palestinians, so that you didn't have innocent Palestinians being killed, was very important. But let's wait and see what happens with this government. When I meet with Prime Minister Olmert and with President Abbas we will discuss the current situation, we will review and I hope recommit to existing agreements, and then I think we will have an opportunity to probe the diplomatic horizon as well, and it is time to start all that work or to engage in all of that work."
U.S. President George Bush spoke with Olmert last Friday. President Abbas only got a visit from Assistant Secretary [David] Welch. Is that the appearance of an "honest broker?"
"The president doesn't need to always make calls to everybody at any given time. The prime minister and the president haven't talked for a while – in fact for quite a long time – and it was a good thing to have a chance to talk to the prime minister and to say that this was an important meeting, that it was important to go ahead with this meeting, and to reaffirm America's commitment to the Quartet principles."

Talking about the political horizon, we have two very different points of view here. President Abbas has been talking about final status or nothing ... while the Israelis have been saying ... no talk about Jerusalem, the refugees or the 1967 borders. How can you reconcile that?
"When you have different views it is probably a good thing to get everyone in the same room so that we can talk about the views. We do have some guidance. We have a road map that it important, and one of the things that I am going to want to talk to the parties about is reaffirming and in fact carrying out their mutual obligations under the road map, including under the first phase [which requires the PA to dismantle the terrorist organizations and Israel to dismantle settlement outposts]."
Do you think that, given the current political realities on both sides, where both leaders appear too weak for their own good, is it possible for them to make any compromises on these hard issues, talk about Jerusalem?
"I am not going to ask anyone to run when we really need to walk for a while, because, as I said, I think if we ask everybody to run somebody is going to fall down. So let's just take this one step at a time. The road map has all of the issues that need to be resolved before a Palestinian state can be established. But the road map does not say that it is not possible to talk about the destination even if you have many, many conditions on both sides that need to be fulfilled before you can get there. The Palestinian people, I think, could benefit from knowing that there is in fact a destination and that the Israelis and Palestinians are prepared to talk about that destination."
Rice said it was important for each side to reaffirm its commitment to existing agreements such as the Sharm el-Sheikh cease-fire agreement and the Rafah agreement on border crossings, "and it is important to begin to scratch the surface of how we would move forward toward a Palestinian state by talking about a political horizon."
Is there a carrot ... here for Hamas? If they accept the Quartet principles, will you take them off the list of terrorist groups?
"The issue of how we deal with terrorists is long and in fact a statutory process in the United States. But clearly, a Palestinian government, no matter who is in it, that accepts the Quartet principles and says, 'We will recognize the right of Israel to exist, we will renounce violence, we will accept all international agreements,' and then acts on those principles, is going to be a government that the United States, and I think the international community, is going to want to take a very hard look at supporting. But those principles are foundational for peace."
Many Israeli politicians and officials are saying that it is all your fault by imposing [Hamas's participation in last year's Palestinian] election on Israel ... If Hamas would not have participated, all these complications and problems would not be there.
"The United States has more faith in the democratic process than that. Yes, elections produced an outcome that was complicated. Perhaps even an outcome that we might not even have liked. But you know we don't have a policy in the United States that says you only get to have an election if you elect people that the United States agrees with. That is not our policy. And this is a long process of the Palestinians coming to terms with the multiple factions in the Palestinian territories. The multiple views in the Palestinian territories of how to relate to Israel, the multiple views on how to get to a two-state solution."
"I don't regret for a moment giving the Palestinian people or supporting the Palestinian people in making an electoral choice. But with electoral choice comes responsibility, and what we have been saying since the day that the elections took place is that election is one thing and it was free and fair and we acknowledge that. But the responsibility then is to have a government that can actually govern, a government that can be responsive to the needs of the Palestinian people. And those needs are going to be best met in a two-state solution. And to have a two-state solution you simply must recognize the right of the other party to exist."
"The Palestinian people, I think like the Israeli people, recognize that a normal life would be a life in which there are two states living side by side in freedom and in peace. I am convinced that the great majority of Palestinians, the great majority of Israelis want exactly that. Now, eventually, I think a democratic process will reflect that underlying desire for peace. But we can't shortcut that process. The desire for

peace has to be underpinned by some fundamental principles, and those fundamental principles include a renunciation of violence, the recognition of the right of both parties to exist, and adherence to international agreements. That's why the Quartet principles are still important. That is why we are continuing to reaffirm them."

[114] Aluf Benn: A kind word for Condoleezza, in “Haaretz”-online 22.02.2007:
People who spoke to United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during her visit this week were impressed by her determination to invest the remainder of her tenure in promoting a "two-state solution" for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The triple handshake she produced with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, which was reminiscent of the old peace ceremonies at the White House, says something about the magnitude of her aspirations. Like her predecessors, Rice has been captivated by the strange enchantment of Middle Eastern diplomacy, and according to her acquaintances she too is frustrated by the abyss that gapes between the obvious solution and the tremendous difficulty of achieving it.
There is no doubt that Rice has personal, political and strategic interests in her frequent trips to the Middle East. She wants an achievement that can be chalked up to her credit. It's good for her to get away from the troubles in Iraq and to appear as a peacemaker at a time when her colleagues in the administration are busy with war. She has to show that she is doing something for the Palestinians, in order to placate Saudi Arabia and Egypt and harness them to the front against Iran. And even though she does not talk about this in public, she sees putting an end to the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state as a moral imperative. In closed conversations, Rice has used imagery from the racist American South where she grew up.
But with no connection to her motivations, Rice's activity is welcome. She is demonstrating that even after years of intifada, and in face of political complications in the PA and a shaky government in Israel, America has not yet despaired of the chances of resolving the conflict. And even if the final-status solution seems to be beyond imagining, and neither Israelis nor Palestinians have even the strength for a partial deal, there is value to the American secretary of state's babysitting. Had it not been for her visit, Olmert would have found it even harder to stand up to Defense Minister Amir Peretz, Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman and the Israel Defense Forces' top brass, who are trying to drag him into an extensive military operation in the Gaza Strip.
Contrary to popular opinion, which accuses the administration of U.S. President George W. Bush of shoulder-shrugging, if not neglect, Bush has done a great deal to create conditions for a future agreement. His critics may be nostalgic for his predecessor, Bill Clinton, who knew every alley in Jerusalem by heart. But Clinton, with all his efforts, did not achieve anything and the summit he ran at Camp David led to disaster. The bleeding reality he bequeathed to Bush left zero space for diplomatic entrepreneurship.
The Bush administration's main contribution, under Rice's leadership, has been to root the idea of the Palestinian state in the international mind, and in the shaping of that state's future borders. The previous administrations tended to grumble about the Jewish settlements in the territories as "an obstacle to peace," but did very little to stop them. Bush and Rice forced former prime minister Ariel Sharon to freeze construction in the settlements beyond the separation fence in the West Bank and pushed him to withdraw to the Green Line (the pre-Six Day War border). Their close supervision has prevented Israel from building the controversial E-1 neighborhood near Ma'ale Adumim, and only recently the Americans stopped Peretz's new settlement in the Jordan Valley.
The Bush letter of April 2004 presented the outline of a future agreement on two of the three core issues: The border will be approximately congruent to the separation fence, with exchanges of territory, and the refugees will be absorbed into Palestine and not by Israel. The cessation of the pressures against the fence and against construction within the settlement blocs has translated the vague language of the Bush letter into physical reality.
The greatest failure of Bush and Rice has been in the marketing of their policy to the world, where they have been depicted as blind supporters of Israel and as

unfair mediators. They have also failed in their attempt to persuade Israel to soften the economic siege on the Palestinians and in having pushed for the Palestinian elections that brought Hamas to power.
Rice believes that in the long term the participation of Hamas in the political fray will soften the movement and strengthen the public base of the Palestinian regime. In the present reality, however, the outcome of the elections has stalled any progress.
This week Rice learned that in the Middle East there aren't good guys and bad guys, and that any alliance is good for its moment. The moderates of yesterday join up with extremists today, as in the Mecca agreement between Abbas and Hamas leader Khaled Meshal. One can guess that Rice was angry at Abbas, but she wiped the spit off her face and promised that she would be back soon for another round of visits. And if only for this, she deserves a kind word, even if it is hard for her to show real results.

[115] Remarks of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Secretary Condoleezza Rice, Ramallah, February 18, 2007:
Abbas: (Via interpreter) As usual, I would like to welcome very much Dr. Rice. She is visiting us these days. As usual, we always maintain a direct contact with her either through visits or by phone calls. And as you all know, she said during her last visit that I will be back in three weeks, and sure enough in three weeks she is back in order to discuss very important political issues that are taking place these days. And among the most prominent issues that we will be discussing today, the upcoming trilateral meeting that will take place tomorrow with Mr. Ehud Olmert, the Israeli Prime Minister. In that meeting, we will be exploring the political horizon, we will be discussing the Israeli-Palestinian issues, and most importantly we will be discussing issues of peace between the two parties.
And of course, we will also be discussing the Mecca agreement, that agreement that took place in the Holy Land of Mecca under the sponsorship of His Majesty, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz. And there will be other additional details that will be the subject of our conversations today.
At the end, I would like once again to express my admiration for the activities of Secretary of State Rice and I would like to take this opportunity to convey my warmest regard to President Bush and his interest in Middle East issues as well as our issues and peace in the region.
Rice: Thank you very much, Mr. President, for welcoming me here yet again and for offering me lunch yet again. I look forward to it very much. (Laughter.) We are here to discuss issues of Palestinian life and issues of peace. And it is, of course, an interesting, even complicated time. And I have been saying, Mr. President, that a number of people said it's a complicated time and I said that if I waited for an uncomplicated time to come to the Middle East, perhaps I would never get on the airplane. (Laughter.)
So I look very much forward to discussing the current situation with you, hearing more about your discussions in Saudi Arabia. I look forward to discussing with you the trilateral that we will have with Prime Minister Olmert tomorrow. I hope that this meeting with the three of us will be an opportunity to examine the current situation, to commit to – recommit to existing agreements, but also to begin to explore and probe the political and diplomatic horizon. And I very much look forward to that meeting.
I want to thank you for your personal commitment to peace, a commitment that is longstanding and that has led the Palestinian people to international agreements that recognize the importance of the two-state solution and all that goes with it. And so I look forward to working with you and I look forward to our discussions today and tomorrow.
Abbas: Thank you.

[116] Aluf Benn: ‘Don’t give up on Abbas’: On eve of summit, Rice urges continued dialogue, in “Haaretz”-online 19.02.2007:
U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice yesterday lowered expectations for today's trilateral summit in Jerusalem, saying: "What I would consider a success tomorrow is that we have gotten started."
"The two parties have not talked about a horizon for a very long time. And we have now the complications of being in an uncertain time, in an interim time before the

Palestinian [unity] government is formed," Rice explained in an interview with Haaretz yesterday, the day before her summit meeting with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas.
Rice said the dialogue with Abbas should continue, but also stressed that the new Palestinian unity government, in which his Fatah movement will participate – recognizing Israel, renouncing terror and honoring previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements – in order to obtain American recognition.
Although the Mecca agreement, which forms the basis for the new unity government, does not include these elements, Rice nevertheless justified her decision to go ahead with the summit. "There are people who said to me, 'Why don't you wait? Wait until the government is formed and then at least you will know what you are dealing with.' I said that I thought this was an especially important time to talk so that we can talk about what has happened and how we deal with the current situation, so that we can talk about the importance of continuing to make progress on some of the agreements that are already there.
"It is a complicated time, but as I said last night, if I waited for an uncomplicated time in the Middle East, I am not sure I would ever get on an airplane," she said.
"Even in this complicated time, it is important to deal with those Palestinians who do accept" the Quartet's conditions. Abbas, she noted, "not only accepts them, he just reiterated them a couple of days ago, and I think it is a good time to reiterate that that relationship is going to remain intact."
Asked whether the United States was surprised by the Mecca agreement, Rice said: "Well, we were continually saying to the Palestinian leadership that it was important for the Quartet principles to be respected. We are not going to make any judgments about whether or not this government will be a government that we can support or not, until we see the government and we see its program and we see what it says, but thus far I haven't seen anything that suggests that it will be in accordance with the Quartet principles."
Are you disappointed with Abbas or with the Saudi king [under whose auspices the agreement was signed]?
"I think and fully understand that the desire to have peace among Palestinians, so that you didn't have innocent Palestinians being killed, was very important. But let's wait and see what happens with this government. When I meet with Prime Minister Olmert and with President Abbas we will discuss the current situation, we will review and I hope recommit to existing agreements, and then I think we will have an opportunity to probe the diplomatic horizon as well, and it is time to start all that work or to engage in all of that work."
U.S. President George Bush spoke with Olmert last Friday. President Abbas only got a visit from Assistant Secretary [David] Welch. Is that the appearance of an "honest broker?"
"The president doesn't need to always make calls to everybody at any given time. The prime minister and the president haven't talked for a while – in fact for quite a long time – and it was a good thing to have a chance to talk to the prime minister and to say that this was an important meeting, that it was important to go ahead with this meeting, and to reaffirm America's commitment to the Quartet principles."
Talking about the political horizon, we have two very different points of view here. President Abbas has been talking about final status or nothing ... while the Israelis have been saying ... no talk about Jerusalem, the refugees or the 1967 borders. How can you reconcile that?
"When you have different views it is probably a good thing to get everyone in the same room so that we can talk about the views. We do have some guidance. We have a road map that it important, and one of the things that I am going to want to talk to the parties about is reaffirming and in fact carrying out their mutual obligations under the road map, including under the first phase [which requires the PA to dismantle the terrorist organizations and Israel to dismantle settlement outposts]."
Do you think that, given the current political realities on both sides, where both leaders appear too weak for their own good, is it possible for them to make any compromises on these hard issues, talk about Jerusalem?
"I am not going to ask anyone to run when we really need to walk for a while, because, as I said, I think if we ask everybody to run somebody is going to fall down. So let's just take this one step at a time. The road map has all of the issues

that need to be resolved before a Palestinian state can be established. But the road map does not say that it is not possible to talk about the destination even if you have many, many conditions on both sides that need to be fulfilled before you can get there. The Palestinian people, I think, could benefit from knowing that there is in fact a destination and that the Israelis and Palestinians are prepared to talk about that destination."
Rice said it was important for each side to reaffirm its commitment to existing agreements such as the Sharm el-Sheikh cease-fire agreement and the Rafah agreement on border crossings, "and it is important to begin to scratch the surface of how we would move forward toward a Palestinian state by talking about a political horizon."
Is there a carrot ... here for Hamas? If they accept the Quartet principles, will you take them off the list of terrorist groups?
"The issue of how we deal with terrorists is long and in fact a statutory process in the United States. But clearly, a Palestinian government, no matter who is in it, that accepts the Quartet principles and says, 'We will recognize the right of Israel to exist, we will renounce violence, we will accept all international agreements,' and then acts on those principles, is going to be a government that the United States, and I think the international community, is going to want to take a very hard look at supporting. But those principles are foundational for peace."
Many Israeli politicians and officials are saying that it is all your fault by imposing [Hamas's participation in last year's Palestinian] election on Israel ... If Hamas would not have participated, all these complications and problems would not be there.
"The United States has more faith in the democratic process than that. Yes, elections produced an outcome that was complicated. Perhaps even an outcome that we might not even have liked. But you know we don't have a policy in the United States that says you only get to have an election if you elect people that the United States agrees with. That is not our policy. And this is a long process of the Palestinians coming to terms with the multiple factions in the Palestinian territories. The multiple views in the Palestinian territories of how to relate to Israel, the multiple views on how to get to a two-state solution.
"I don't regret for a moment giving the Palestinian people or supporting the Palestinian people in making an electoral choice. But with electoral choice comes responsibility, and what we have been saying since the day that the elections took place is that election is one thing and it was free and fair and we acknowledge that. But the responsibility then is to have a government that can actually govern, a government that can be responsive to the needs of the Palestinian people. And those needs are going to be best met in a two-state solution. And to have a two-state solution you simply must recognize the right of the other party to exist.
"The Palestinian people, I think like the Israeli people, recognize that a normal life would be a life in which there are two states living side by side in freedom and in peace. I am convinced that the great majority of Palestinians, the great majority of Israelis want exactly that. Now, eventually, I think a democratic process will reflect that underlying desire for peace. But we can't shortcut that process. The desire for peace has to be underpinned by some fundamental principles, and those fundamental principles include a renunciation of violence, the recognition of the right of both parties to exist, and adherence to international agreements. That's why the Quartet principles are still important. That is why we are continuing to reaffirm them." recognizing Israel, renouncing terror and honoring previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements –- in order to obtain American recognition.
Although the Mecca agreement, which forms the basis for the new unity government, does not include these elements, Rice nevertheless justified her decision to go ahead with the summit. "There are people who said to me, 'Why don't you wait? Wait until the government is formed and then at least you will know what you are dealing with.' I said that I thought this was an especially important time to talk so that we can talk about what has happened and how we deal with the current situation, so that we can talk about the importance of continuing to make progress on some of the agreements that are already there.
"It is a complicated time, but as I said last night, if I waited for an uncomplicated time in the Middle East, I am not sure I would ever get on an airplane," she said. "Even in this complicated time, it is important to deal with those Palestinians who do

accept" the Quartet's conditions. Abbas, she noted, "not only accepts them, he just reiterated them a couple of days ago, and I think it is a good time to reiterate that that relationship is going to remain intact."
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"The United States has more faith in the democratic process than that. Yes, elections produced an outcome that was complicated. Perhaps even an outcome that we might not even have liked. But you know we don't have a policy in the United States that says you only get to have an election if you elect people that the United States agrees with. That is not our policy. And this is a long process of the Palestinians coming to terms with the multiple factions in the Palestinian territories. The multiple views in the Palestinian territories of how to relate to Israel, the multiple views on how to get to a two-state solution.
"I don't regret for a moment giving the Palestinian people or supporting the Palestinian people in making an electoral choice. But with electoral choice comes responsibility, and what we have been saying since the day that the elections took place is that election is one thing and it was free and fair and we acknowledge that. But the responsibility then is to have a government that can actually govern, a government that can be responsive to the needs of the Palestinian people. And those needs are going to be best met in a two-state solution. And to have a two-state solution you simply must recognize the right of the other party to exist.
"The Palestinian people, I think like the Israeli people, recognize that a normal life would be a life in which there are two states living side by side in freedom and in peace. I am convinced that the great majority of Palestinians, the great majority of Israelis want exactly that. Now, eventually, I think a democratic process will reflect that underlying desire for peace. But we can't shortcut that process. **The desire for peace has to be underpinned by some fundamental principles, and those fundamental principles include a renunciation of violence, the recognition of the right of both parties to exist, and adherence to international agreements.** That's why the Quartet principles are still important. That is why we are continuing to reaffirm them."

[117] Zvi Bar'el: Rice's road map is full of holes, in "Haaretz"-online 18.02.2007:
How easy it is for the United States to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: It is both sticking to the road map and not committed to it; Washington seeks democracy but can also dismiss its results; it is opposed to settlements, not to speak of outposts, but has already accepted them as a fait accompli; it is in favor of a final accord, but before this is achieved, it has defined its prior conditions.
In short, solving this conflict is not essential, it's a luxury item – from Washington's point of view. The conflict that brings Condoleezza Rice to the region conforms to the "turkey principle," which stipulates that if you have wings, this does not mean you can fly, but you can feel free to make noise.
For example, that noise about the road map. There is no document that is more vague and more unfocused; it's almost impressionistic: Everyone can find what he wants in it. Resolutions 242 and 338, the Arab initiative, the Arab League decisions of 2002, an end to terror and a functioning democracy in the Palestinian Authority and even, believe it or not, an Israeli commitment to enable Palestinians to lead normal lives. This entire salad is spread over the map, which is like a lacy tablecloth and has the pretension of resembling a work document only because it includes stages and a timetable. A timetable, by the way, which already ended in 2005.
Even if Rice declares that she is committed to the road map, it would be good if someone asks her to which part of it she is committed? To the longed-for Palestinian democracy? The same democracy that brought Hamas to power? Or, perhaps, the section that requires Israel to enable the Palestinians to conduct normal lives? Or could it be the first section of the document, in which the Palestinian Authority commits to take effective steps to dismantle the infrastructure of terror? Ah, but the terror infrastructure of 2003 is the same Hamas that is now running the government after winning the democratic battle Washington so wished to see.
Many other sections in the initial stage of the road map need to be realized, the first of which is that the Palestinian Authority recognize Israel's right to exist in peace, while declaring a complete cease-fire. But a cease-fire already exists between the

PA and Israel and, in the meantime, the Mecca agreement was also signed. But this, as we know, is an odious agreement, one designed to deceive the world, only to bring about a lifting of the embargo on the Palestinian Authority.
For a long time now, the road map has not been a suitable mold in which to pour the contents of a diplomatic process. It was written and approved on the basis that Arafat would live forever; that Hamas would not want or be capable of participating in political life in Palestine; and that Fatah would always be Israel's contrarian interlocutor and thus eliminate the need to make concessions. Despite these assurances, Israel took the trouble of submitting countless reservations about this map, as if it really were about to become a work plan.
We have said nothing yet about the section in the map that requires Israel to demolish illegal outposts built since March 2001 and to freeze all settlement activity. Rice can say what she wants about the road map, but besides words, Washington has really done nothing to demonstrate this commitment.
This conflict needs a new working paper, one the current administration in Washington is incapable of producing. Primarily this is so because it does not think a strategic threat is involved, because the administration knows how to deal with real strategic threats, rather than imagined ones: When necessary, it conducts practical negotiations with the head of the axis of evil, North Korea; it conducts effective talks with Libya; it is ready to talk with Iran about Iraq and to conduct a dialogue in Iraq with terror gangs that are accorded the title of "rebels" or "insurgents." Because when there is a real threat, one does not get bogged down in the fine points. Instead, one talks with everyone and pays in legal tender. In Palestine, from Washington's perspective, it is possible to continue to market values, to aspire for a utopian state with a utopian regime, and to compose documents in its honor, because there is no immediate danger if they are not implemented.

[118] Remarks With Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni Secretary Condoleezza Rice, Jerusalem, February 17, 2007:
Livni: Yes, hello. It's a pleasure to welcome Secretary Rice to Israel. This meeting – we're going to have a meeting which will be more of a preparatory meeting before the trilateral summit this week. This is a very sensitive point in time after the agreements between the Fatah and Hamas. Unfortunate and before the formation of the future Palestinian government, the understandings doesn't meet the requirements of the international community. It is crucial to understand that Israel with the international community expects any Palestinian government to meet these requirements fully and completely. These requirements are not obstacle for peace, but they are the basic conditions and foundation for any kind of – for the vision of two-state solution. I think that also the moderates in the Palestinian side need to understand that the path toward a Palestinian state goes through renunciation of violence and terrorism and not by compromising with terror. So we are going to discuss all these matters and next week we are going to – this is going to be part of the trilateral meeting next week.
Rice: Well, thank you very much for welcoming me again to Israel. I look very much forward to our dinner tonight and we will have a chance to have preparatory talks in advance of both my bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Olmert tomorrow and then also the trilateral meeting. And I look forward to that meeting. As I have said, it is, in fact, a complicated time because we are between the announcement of the intention to form a government and the actual formation of the government. The Quartet has, of course, reiterated the importance of its principles because they are foundational principles for peace. It only makes sense that you have to renounce violence. It only makes sense that you have to recognize the right of your partner to exist and to respect international agreements. And so those principles remain the foundational principles for the formation of two states and, in fact, for the formation of leadership that can lead to that two-state solution. We, of course, have said that we will await the formation of the government before making any decisions about it, and I think that is generally the view that is held in the international community as a whole. But I have said that if one waited for the perfect time to come to the Middle East, perhaps you wouldn't get on an airplane; and so despite the complications, it's an important time to have these discussions, it's an important time to talk about how we advance the vision of two states living side by side in peace and in

freedom. And I look forward to exploring, probing the political horizon with Prime Minister Olmert and with President Abbas. And so thank you very much for welcoming me here and I look forward to dinner tonight.
Livni: Thank you.

[119] Vgl. dazu Reiner Bernstein: Neue Bewegung in Nahost, in der Menüleiste "Bestandsaufnahmen und Perspektiven" dieser Homepage.

[120] Vgl. Art. 7 Ziff. 3 des Textes in Reiner Bernstein: Von Gaza nach Genf. Schwalbach/Ts. 2006, S. 144.

[121] Yugal Yoaz: Beinisch: Make courts independent, in „Haaretz"-online 15.03.2007:
Supreme Court President Dorit Beinisch said yesterday she wants to turn the court system into a completely independent authority, with no administrative or financial dependence on the Justice Ministry. Currently, the Courts Administration is a unit of the Justice Ministry, and the ministry therefore has some input into both appointments and budgets. The idea of complete independence was first promoted by Beinisch's predecessor, Aharon Barak.
"Only in the last few months, since becoming Supreme Court president, has it become clear to me how severe the courts' administrative lack of independence is," Beinisch said, speaking at a rare press conference. "The dependence on [the justice minister] is enormous. We are dependent on outside parties in matters of budgeting, construction and logistics."
For instance, Beinisch has drafted a plan to make the courts' management more efficient, but parts of it require legislation – which means cooperation from the justice minister.
"For years, a campaign has been waged to undermine public faith in the court, and all kinds of people are engaged in this campaign," she continued, without elaborating. "We have no time for conflicts with a minister or anyone else. I want to get things moving."
Beinisch was careful not to directly attack the current justice minister, Daniel Friedmann, but the platform she outlined clearly contradicted his at several key points.
"What is happening now is undermining the attractiveness of being a judge," she declared. "Scrutinizing the candidates has become the fashion, and every judge is considered suspect in advance. A judicial candidate knows he is embarking on hard labor. He will not earn what people earn in the private sector, he will sit in a tiny cell, and every day he will read in the paper about the mistakes he made. The fact is that private-sector lawyers don't want to go this route. We are not managing to find suitable candidates among [private] lawyers. Instead of this being the most desirable job, we are undermining it."
Regarding Friedmann's bill to restrict the Supreme Court's power to overturn Knesset legislation, Beinisch said that while she does not object to the provision limiting this power to nine-justice panels, she does oppose the provision that would enable the Knesset to reinstate laws overturned by the court. The Canadian constitution, on which this proposal is based, was the result of a political compromise unsuited to Israel's situation, she said. She also said that any such law should be part of a constitution, and not enacted separately.
Beinisch also opposes any change in the Judicial Appointments Committee's composition, such as the addition of politicians or professors. "You don't do this overnight; this is part of our constitution," she said. "The committee, in my view, is critical to the [judicial] system's character and independence. It is no accident that the system was built with a professional majority on the committee, with respectable representation for the political sector. Many countries are envious of our model. The question is which concept you prefer – professional appointments or political ones. That's the heart of the matter."
Regarding Friedmann's idea of replacing two of the committee's three Supreme Court justices with lower court judges, she demanded: "If Professor Friedmann or others were appointing university professors, would the appointments be made by doctoral students?"

Beinisch also objected to Friedmann's idea of canceling the seniority system, under which the Supreme Court president is always the longest-serving justice on the court, and said that while one or two professors or private-sector lawyers on the court would be acceptable, most justices should come from either the lower courts or the state prosecution.
Explaining her recent letter to the Judicial Appointments Committee, in which she urged it to appoint new judges immediately and postpone discussion of ways to improve the screening of candidates, she said the shortage of judges had reached crisis proportions, and if not dealt with now, was liable to become so great that "we won't be able to catch up."
"I hope the justice minister will study the system's needs and understand that his plans, precisely because they are revolutionary, are long-term and require serious examination," she said. "It is very important to appoint new judges quickly ... The percentage of errors is not sufficient to justify halting the appointments."
She also denied that the committee needs more information than it has to screen candidates, saying, "There are not many civil service positions where as much is known about the candidates as in the judiciary." Friedmann argues that the committee often has too little information to make intelligent choices.

[122] Jörn Böhme, Tel Aviv: „The Palestinian Unity Government; The Arab League Initiative and Israel – Is There a Partner?"
– Conference on the different developments as viewed by the Israeli Government, the Opposition and the Palestinians:
The hall in the ZOA ("Zionists of America") House was packed – just few young people, but many representatives of the diplomatic and international community to which the conference was addressed.
In his opening word, Ambassador Ramiro Cibrian-Uzal, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to the State of Israel, pointed to the fact that the EU has declared it a strategic interest that the Israeli-Arab conflict be settled. He quoted Antonio Gramsci who talked about the pessimism of the intelligence, but the optimism of the will.
Gadi Baltiansky, the Director-General of the Geneva Initiative, pointed to two polls, according to which 41% of the Israeli public supports the Saudi Initiative as a basis for a settlement of the conflict and 47% of the Jewish population of Israel say yes to negotiations with a Palestinian unity government.
Minister of Housing and Construction Meir Sheetrit ("Kadima") spoke of a stalemate and deadlock. During the times of Arafat at least there had been some kind of address. But today there were the radical forces that don't accept Israel, and the moderate forces are weak. He said he wants a Jewish state with a large Jewish majority, but that not enough efforts for peace are made. The only way to achieve peace would be through peace. He had advocated in the past to take the Saudi Initiative and talk about it. It could be a basis, even though he didn't agree with all the ingredients and proposals. For example, he said that he is against the withdrawal to the 1967 borders. According to Sheetrit, it is possible to achieve peace with the Palestinians without any mediators. He referred to mistakes of past governments. Arafat told him that in Camp David in 2000 there had been just one eye to eye meeting between him and Ehud Barak. It was a mistake not to focus on the final outcome first, but to proceed in phases. There is no point in interim agreements, disengagement, realignment and unilateral steps. If there is no agreement, the Arab Initiative should be accepted. Iran should be isolated by creating peace through talks and negotiations. A draft for a permanent agreement should be put on the table. Without an agreement with the Palestinians there would be no agreements with the Arab states. Israel should stop running around trying to grab its tail. Also he said, it was wrong to use security as an excuse not to deal with the pressing internal problems of Israel like social issues, crime, etc.
Qadura Faris pointed to the new direction inside "Hamas" that came with the decision to participate in the elections in January 2006. He was critical of "Fatah" by saying that we didn't miss a mistake. He said that a Palestinian state in the borders of 1967 now has a mandate from "Hamas." Gaza needs to be rebuilt as an example for the Palestinian people. In view of the upcoming summit meeting on February 19, Faris said that the Palestinians are tired of handshakes and words and then nothing happening. He criticized the presence of Israeli military units in Palestinian towns

and the roadblocks. He also expressed the hope that Marwan Barghouti would be the new leader of the Palestinian people.
Colette Avital ("Labour Party") said that the Saudi Initiative expresses a true and dramatic change. Time is of great importance and 40 years after the start of the occupation there is no excuse anymore. She said that the current government is without an agenda and that it needs one, because she doesn't know what "Labour" is doing in the government if there is no agenda.
Yossi Beilin also said that never before the Arab Initiative in March, 2002 the Arab world had said to Israel: Give up territories and we will accept you. He expressed his fear that after the summit on this coming Monday, February 19, there would be again nothing more than a commitment to the "Road Map" which he called an idiotic paper. He referred to the fact that Israel has not even evacuated the illegal outposts on the grounds that it was not the right time. According to this view there would never be a right time. There would be no peace, if there would be not withdrawal to more or less to the 1967 border. He referred to the opportunity that lies in the fact that "Kadima", "Labour", "Meretz" and the Arab parties have 70 mandates in the Knesset and referred to things, which he heard Tsipi Livni, Shimon Peres and Ehud Olmert say, which were acceptable to him. Something needs to be done all the time – not just words, Beilin said.
In the discussion people criticized the Israeli government as a refusal government, because of the lack of initiative, the expansion of settlements and asked if Corporal Gilad Shalit will be freed and what could be done about suicide bombers.
Meir Sheetrit rejected the notion of a "refusal government" and pointed to partners he discovers in "Kadima." Qadura Faris demanded that Gilad Shalit should not be used for political gains. He pointed to the fact that he was a soldier and not kidnapped when being on the beach in Gaza and said that he was alive and well. He said there is no justification for suicide bombings, but that they would only stop if peace is achieved. Colette Avital demanded negotiations with the Palestinian government.

[123] "Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre": Text of Mecca Accord for Palestinian Coalition Government:
MECCA – Under the Palestinians' Mecca Accord, the mainstream Fatah movement and the militant group Hamas agreed on forming a new coalition government that will respect previous peace deals with Israel.
The accord came in the form of a letter from Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah, designating Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas to form the government.
a) The following is a text of Abbas' message to Haniyeh:
In our capacity as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority and after reviewing the Basic Law and based on the authorities vested in us:
First: I commission you to form the next Palestinian government within the set period as stiputaled in the Basic Law [five weeks].
Second: After concluding the formation of the government and presenting it to us, the government will be presented to the Palestinian Legislative Council to get the confidence vote.
Third: I call upon you as Prime Minister of the next government to abide by the interests of the Palestinian people and to preserve its rights and to maintain their accomplishments and develop them and to work on achieving their national goals as ratified by the resolutions Palestine National Council meetings and the Basic Law articles and the National Reconciliation Document and the Arab Summit resolutions and based on this, I call upon you to respect the Arab and international legitimacy resolutions and the agreements signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization.
May God help you in your steps and duties.
b) The Mecca Agreement, read out by Nabil Amr, media adviser to the Palestinian Authority president, in Mecca:
In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate,
"Glory to God who did take His servant for a journey by night from the sacred mosque to the farthest mosque whose precincts we did bless."

Based on the noble initiative announced by Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdallah Bin-Abd-al-Aziz, king of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and under his majesty's generous auspices, Palestinian dialogues of accord and agreement were held in holy Mecca between Fatah and HAMAS 19-21 Muharram 1428 Hegira, corresponding to 6-8 February 2007. And with God's help, these dialogues achieved success, as agreement was reached on the following:
First, stressing the sanctity of Palestinian blood and taking all steps to prevent bloodshed, while emphasizing the importance of national unity as a basis for national steadfastness and resistance against the occupation, in addition to achieving legitimate national aims of the Palestinian people and espousing the language of dialogue as the sole foundation for resolving political disagreements on the Palestinian scene. In this context, we offer our profound gratitude to the brothers in sisterly Egypt and the Egyptian security delegation in Gaza, who exerted great efforts to pacify the situation in the sector recently.
Second, agreeing on forming a Palestinian national unity government in accordance with a detailed agreement approved by the two parties, and urgently take the constitutional procedures to bolster it.
Third, proceeding with developing and re-forming the PLO and speeding up the preliminary committee's work in accordance with the Cairo and Damascus understandings. And agreement was reached on detailed steps between the two sides in this connection.
Fourth, stressing the political partnership principle on the basis of the laws applied by the Palestinian National Authority and political pluralism, based on an agreement endorsed by the two sides. While we announce this agreement to our Palestinian masses, the masses of our Arab and Islamic nation, all friends worldwide, we emphasize our commitment to it, in letter and spirit, in order to focus on achieving our national aims, getting rid of the occupation, restoring our rights, and focusing on the main issues, first and foremost the Jerusalem and refugee issues, Al-Aqsa Mosque issue, the prisoners issue, the detainees issue, and tackling the [security] fence and settlement issue.
It is God who grants success.
Holy Mecca, 21 Muharram 1428 Hegira, corresponding to 8 February 2007.
May God's peace be upon you.

[124] Quartet Statement on the Agreement to Form A Palestinian National Unity Government, Washington, 9 February 2007:
The Quartet Principals – Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, High Representative for European Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner – discussed by telephone today the situation in the Middle East.
The Quartet welcomed the role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in reaching the agreement to form a Palestinian National Unity government. The Quartet expressed hope that the desired calm would prevail.
While awaiting formation of the new Palestinian government, the Quartet reaffirmed its statement of February 2 regarding its support for a Palestinian government committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap.
Quartet members will meet February 21 in Berlin to continue their consideration of these developments, and to review formation and implementation of the agreement on the government. They welcomed the upcoming February 19 trilateral meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and Palestinian National Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. The Quartet will discuss the way ahead at the February 21 meeting.

[125] Rami G. Khouri: Where to, after the Mecca agreement?, in “The Daily Star” 10.02.2007:
The most significant thing about the national unity government agreement signed Thursday by Hamas and Fatah in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, under Saudi auspices was that it was signed in Mecca under Saudi auspices. This is probably more important

for what it tells us about Saudi diplomatic stirrings than what it says about Palestinian-Israeli issues.
If this is the beginning of a new era in which diplomatically dynamic Saudis and politically pragmatic Palestinians assert themselves more forcefully on the regional stage, we might be on the threshold of better days ahead for the Middle East. I would not bet the family savings on it, but neither can we ignore the potential that is there.
Nobody should expect this accord to jumpstart a new Arab-Israeli peace process, mainly because Israel and the United States – with Western Europe increasingly in tow – have not seriously explored real openings for a negotiated peace in the past decade. The most forceful move ever made by the Quartet – the US, the United Nations, the European Union, and Russia – that is supposed to shepherd the peace-making process, was to slap sanctions and tough demands on the Hamas-led Palestinian government, without making equal demands of Israel. As such, the Quartet looks more and more like a legitimizing cover for Israeli-American positions that have killed any chance of a peace process.
Israel and the US are likely to repeat the Quartet's three demands: that the new Palestinian government explicitly renounce terrorism, honor all existing Palestinian agreements with Israel, and recognize Israel's right to exist. These are reasonable and legitimate demands – but only if Israel is required to abide by the same rules, which is not the case. The Quartet must demand, simultaneously, that Israel stop its colonization of Arab lands, its expansion of settlements, and its routine killings or assassinations of Palestinian militants.
The key to a breakthrough is for Israel, the US and other Western countries to give to the Palestinians as much as what they demand the Palestinians give to Israel. In this respect, the Palestinian accord in Mecca will not meet Quartet demands, and is unlikely to advance peace talks. However it could mark a positive turning point if the Israeli-American-Quartet camp were to see peace-making as a win-win situation, in which progress took place on the back of mutual gains by both sides, rather than through enforcement of Israel's unilateral demands.
The Palestinian national unity government has offered Israel two significant but symbolic olive branches: respect for all previous Palestinian agreements (such as the Oslo Accords and the Palestinian Liberation Organization's recognition of Israel's right to exist); and acceptance of the 2002 Arab peace plan, which offers Israel full peace in return for full withdrawal from occupied lands and a negotiated resolution of the Palestinian refugee issue. This same government, though, also recommitted itself to other Palestinian documents and Arab positions that make armed resistance against Israeli occupation both legitimate and noble. Which path defines Palestinian policy will largely reflect how Israel and the West respond to the Mecca agreement.
Those who truly seek peace should see this Palestinian gesture as an opportunity to explore serious means of negotiating a comprehensive, permanent peace agreement. Israel must make an important choice in the coming months: Will it reciprocate the Palestinian-Saudi gesture in kind and make equally broad but well-intentioned declarations of intent to coexist in peace and equality? Or will it hold fast to its ironclad policy of refusing any diplomatic probes and persisting in its colonization, strangulation and military assaults on the Palestinians?
The agreement comes at a time when Saudi Arabia is also actively engaged with Iran in defusing tensions in Lebanon and in the standoff between Iran and the international community over Tehran's nuclear industry. Saudi Arabia affirmed its clout within the region in fostering the Palestinian accord, which Syria and Egypt both tried but failed to do. If Saudi Arabia is more willing to use its considerable moral, religious, and financial power to help broker conflict resolutions in the Middle East, we should all welcome that. But we must also respond to Saudi gestures, rather than let them wither on the vine, as happened with the 2002 Arab-Israeli peace plan that Israel and the US never breathed life into.
It is important to recognize the significance of a diplomatically stirring Saudi Arabia that can have a positive impact in Iran, Syria, Palestine-Israel, and Lebanon, for starters. As in 2002, Saudis and Palestinians have made a sincere, constructive gesture for peaceful coexistence. A return gesture of equal magnitude could change history. Snubbing this Arab gesture would only exacerbate existing tensions

and conflicts in the region, and probably push them toward levels of suffering and destruction that would make the past five years look like a picnic.

[126] Israeli Foreign Ministry: Hamas-Fatah Agreement does not meet requirements of the international community, 25.02.2007:
The Hamas-Fatah agreement reached at Mecca does not meet the requirements set out by the Quartet for any Palestinian government. To the contrary, this agreement, as well as Hamas' statements and actions, indicates that Hamas continues to seek to gain international legitimacy without compromising on its fundamentalist ideology, including its goal of the destruction of Israel.
It was the clear statements of the Hamas advocating violence, opposing a two-state solution, and denying the right of Israel to exist, as well as its direct involvement in terrorism, which prompted the international community to set out three clear conditions for any Palestinian government to attain legitimacy and international cooperation. The burden of proof that it has changed is on the Hamas, a designated terrorist organization. But in fact, as detailed below, express statements by Hamas leaders following the agreement leave no room for doubt that there has been no movement by Hamas towards accepting these foundational principles for peace.
The Quartet has demanded that any Palestinian government must be committed to these three conditions and that "it should contain no member" who has not committed to them. Participation in a government, the policy of which is not based on a commitment to these principles, can clearly not be considered to satisfy the Quartet's demand.
There is currently no agreed platform or binding agreement regarding the policy of a future government. The letter of appointment from Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas included in the Hamas-Fatah agreement invites Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh to form a government, but cannot in itself constitute the political platform of the future government and cannot be considered to represent fulfillment of any conditions that government is required to fulfill.
But even were the letter a binding commitment representing the policy of the new government, it would not meet any of the three fundamental requirements repeatedly set out by the Quartet: to recognize Israel, to renounce terrorism and violence, and to accept previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap.

1. *Recognition of Israel:* The Quartet's requirements recognize that there can be no hope of a two-state solution, unless each recognizes the right of the other to a state. Recognition of the right of Israel to exist is en essential precondition for any Palestinian partner in peace. The Hamas-Fatah letter of appointment contains no recognition of the State of Israel. In fact, the word "Israel" does not appear in the document. Even the PLO-Israel agreements are referred to merely as "agreements signed by the PLO". The fact that Hamas has not changed its intransigent position on this issue in the slightest was emphasized by Ismail Haniyeh's adviser, Ahmed Youssef just a few days after the conclusion of the agreement: "The issue of recognition was not addressed at all in Mecca. In the platform of the new government there will be no sign of recognition (of Israel), regardless of the pressures the United States and the Quartet would exert." (Reuters 10 Feb 2007) Similarly, Hamas spokesman Ismail Radwan, emphasized that the agreement marked no change in Hamas' refusal to recognize Israel: "The agreement reached at Mecca does not mean recognition of the Israeli entity... The position of Hamas is firm and well known and it is one of non-recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist entity...." (Interview to French News Agency 9 Feb 2007)
2. *Renunciation of terrorism and violence:* 'Two states living side by side in peace and security' can never arise if one side still advocates the use of terror. For this reason, the Quartet has repeatedly insisted that any Palestinian government renounce terrorism and violence. The letter of appointment contains no undertaking to refrain from terrorism and violence. To the contrary, the letter calls on the new government to commit itself to the National Conciliation Document. This document, it will be recalled, explicitly legitimizes the use of violence and terrorism, calling on the parties "to uphold resistance. in tandem with political action (Article 3) and "to lead and engage in resistance against the occupation" (Article 10). Such calls are, of course, in direct contradiction to Palestinian obligations in previous agreements,

including the Roadmap, which call, inter alia, for an immediate end to "armed activity and all acts of violence against Israelis anywhere." Hamas' refusal to renounce violence was clearly stated by Hamas' representative in Lebanon, Usama Hamdan: "Everyone knows that one of the conditions for recognition of the government and opening the flow of money to it was to be the end of violence and resistance. We said the resistance would continue and we have carried out actions such as capturing the Israeli soldier Shalit, as well as other actions against the aggressive occupation. Hamas still sees resistance as a strategic option and will not make any concessions until – if Allah wills it- we shall be victorious in Palestine." (Interview on Al-Manar radio station 14 Feb 2007) In practice too, Hamas has given no indication of any intention to renounce violence. It continues to hold Gilad Shalit hostage, to smuggle illegal weapons and explosives into the territories, and to glorify terrorism and violence. In addition, it has taken no measures to implement Palestinian obligations to prevent acts of violence by other Palestinian groups, including the firing of Kassam missiles on Israeli towns and villages. To the contrary, Hamas government spokesmen have made clear that they support such attacks and have no intention whatsoever of preventing them.

3. *Acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap:* The Quartet has repeatedly insisted that any Palestinian government is required to accept previous Palestinian obligations and agreements, including the Roadmap. These agreements reflect the result of painstaking negotiations and compromises by both sides. There can be no value in working to new agreements with a partner who reneges on previous ones. The letter of appointment calls on the new government "to respect the agreements signed by the PLO", but this falls far short of the Quartet's requirement for several reasons:

a. The respect for the agreements is stated to be 'on the basis' of the Palestinian higher national interests and other documents, including the National Conciliation Document which, as noted above, legitimizes and calls for acts of terror. A provision which makes respect for the agreements subject to these other considerations amounts to little more than a willingness to selectively accept those parts of the agreements which do not contradict Hamas' longstanding extremist goals. The fact that the so-called 'respect' for agreements has no meaning in practice was explicitly noted by Khalil Abu Leila, of Hamas' political bureau. When asked whether Hamas has committed itself to respecting the PLO agreements, he replied: "Only as concerns matters that do not contradict the higher interest of the Palestinian people. That is important. We as Palestinians can negotiate with the help of our Arab brethren and say: "Where then is the higher Palestinian interest? If we can agree, we shall act according to that agreement. I say that the way of the previous government, based on Palestinian unity, was in the right direction, for the higher Palestinian interest. If we can find that interest in the agreements (signed by the PLO) we shall abide by them. But if the interest lies elsewhere we must get rid of them (the agreements) and return to jihad (war) with the oppressive Zionist enemy." (Interview to BBC Arabic Service 16.2.2007, emphasis added)

b. While the word 'respect' seems to indicate a commitment to the agreements, the insistence of the Hamas leadership on not using the words 'accept' or 'commit', as required by the Quartet, suggests that they intend to mean something far less binding. Moussa Abu Marzouk, Deputy Head of Hamas Political Bureau emphasized the importance of this distinction in the days following the agreement: "There were detailed discussions on this issue, regarding the words 'respect' and 'commit' and it was clear to all that Hamas could not commit to something which is not included in the political positions it has presented on this issue. The fact that Abu Mazen accepted the word 'respect' in the letter of appointment made an important contribution to the breakthrough."(Interview on Hamas website 17 Feb 2007) The distinction between the terms 'respect' and 'commit' is all the more apparent since, in the same letter of invitation, the word 'commit' is used – in relation to the commitment of the new government to the 'higher interests' of the Palestinian people and to other documents, including the National Conciliation Document. Additionally, it will be recalled that the Quartet called for respect not just for agreements, but also other obligations, "including the Roadmap", since the Roadmap is not a formally singed agreement between the parties. The omission of any reference to the Road Map raises troubling questions as regards the scope of the provision.

c. Statements by Hamas leaders make it clear that Hamas' fundamental opposition to the Israeli-Palestinian agreements remains unaltered. Usama Hamdan, Hamas' representative in Lebanon, restated its uncompromising position: "All the agreements with the occupation were historic errors because they implied recognition of the legitimacy of occupation and opposition to further resistance." (Interview on Al-Manar Radio station 14 Feb 2007)
d. Hamas' actions similarly disprove any suggestion that it is prepared to comply with the provisions of the agreements reached between the PLO and Israel. These agreements set out obligations, inter alia, requiring the Palestinian side:
– to take action against all expressions of violence and terrorism (see e.g. Interim Agreement, Annex I, Article 2; Wye River Memorandum paragraph A; Roadmap, Phase 1)
– to restrain individuals and groups conducting and planning violent attacks on Israelis anywhere (e.g. Roadmap, Phase 1)
– to confiscate all illegal weapons and ammunition (e.g. Sharm e-Sheikh Memorandum, Para. 8; Roadmap, Phase 1)
– to respect internationally-accepted norms and principles of human rights (e.g. Interim Agreement, Article XIX)
– to foster mutual understanding, abstain from incitement, and ensure that its education system contribute to peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples (e.g. Interim Agreement XXII) Any suggestion that Hamas respects these agreements contrasts starkly with its continued smuggling of illegal weapons, its glorification of violence and terror, its vicious incitement against Israel, and its persistent violation of the fundamental human rights of the Palestinians it claims to represent.

In conclusion, the evidence indicates that Hamas has not changed, neither in principle nor in practice, in order to comply with the international community's requirements set out by the Quartet, or to acquiesce to the political platform of a Palestinian government which is committed to these principles. To the contrary, Hamas' outright rejection of these requirements was stated clearly by Khalil Abu Leila, of Hamas' political bureau, just days after the agreement was reached: "I believe that Mecca was a success, because the aim was reached, but as far as the principles of Hamas are concerned, Hamas maintains its positions for the higher Palestinian interest. It continues not to agree to surrender and obey the conditions of the Quartet." (Interview on BBC Arabic Service 16 Feb 2007, emphasis added)
The conditions set out by the Quartet, which Hamas continues to reject, are not obstacles to peace, but rather the basic tests by which the international community can determine whether any Palestinian government is capable of being a partner in peace. As such, they are not subject to negotiation and cannot be satisfied by vague formulations or hopeful interpretations. Were any government which refuses to meet these basic foundational principles for peace to receive international legitimacy and support, this would be a grave setback for prospects of peace, and a betrayal of the genuine moderates, on both sides of the conflict, who truly believe in a two-state solution to the conflict and seek to make it a reality.

[127] Jonathan Lis: J'lem Mayor postpones Temple Mt. construction, in "Haaretz"-online 12.02.2007:
Jerusalem mayor Uri Lupolianski announced late Sunday night that he has decided to postpone construction of the walkway at the Mugrabi Ascent until zoning authorities complete plans for the area.
"The Mayor of Jerusalem, Uri Lupolianski, together with Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz, Rabbi for the Kotel and Holy Places, decided last night to allow public discussion of the plans to construct the Mugrabi Bridge at the planning and construction committees," city spokesman Gideon Schmerling said in a statement.
"This is due to the sensitivity of the plan and following meetings and discussions with representatives from eastern Jerusalem who requested to look over the plans and voice their opinions."
Schmerling added that the archeological work conducted by the Antiquities Authority at the site would continue.
Over the past several days, Lupolianski held meetings and discussions with various representatives from eastern Jerusalem, together with Rabbi Rabinowitz, and Lupolianski assured them that he will allow open discussion with full disclosure in

order to make it clear that there is no intention to enter the Temple Mount or cause any damage to it.
Lupolianski and Western Wall rabbi Shmuel Rabinovich drafted the decision Sunday following conversations with Attorney General Menachem Mazuz, municipal planning authorities, Muslim community leaders and other representatives of the Arab population of East Jerusalem, in order to allow the general public to review plans for the bridge and submit opposition.
Lupolianski announced that the measure reflects a desire for transparency and to foster a sense of cooperation with residents in the construction process. He also wanted to avoid the feeling among the public that the work constitutes some sort of an Israeli ambush.
In practice, the decision means that approval of the plan will be postponed until a hearing of all the letters of opposition filed by city residents. The salvage excavation being conducted by the Antiquities Authority is expected to continue at this stage, parallel to the public discussion of the zoning plan.
Jerusalem municipal sources said Sunday that the decision could in fact be postponed for months, and that there is no certainty the zoning authorities that hear the arguments of those opposed will actually approve the plan in the end.
Settlers to gov't: Don't give in to threats
The Yesha settlers council voiced support of continued work at the site, urging the government not to "surrender to threats" and to open the Temple Mount to Jewish worship, Israel Radio reported Monday.
It quoted the Rabbinical Committee of the Yesha settlers council as saying "The violent events on the Temple Mount are the rotten fruit of the weakness that Israeli governments have demonstrated since the liberation of the Temple Mount in the Six Day War.
"This is a direct result of the negation of the rights of the Jews at the site.
The council announced that it "backs the government, which is not surrendering to threats and fabrications," the radio said.
Many rabbis have ruled the Temple Mount site off-limits to Jews, citing prohibitions on entering the area where the Temple courtyard once lay, and the difficulty of fulfilling the ancient ritual requirement of cleansing with the ashes of a red heifer.
'Plan engendered wave of rumor
Lupolianski told associates Sunday that "the plan to construct the walkway engendered a wave of rumor and speculation about Israeli intentions regarding the [Al-Aqsa] mosque."
"We therefore decided to be totally transparent with all residents about the walkway construction plan, so they will know clearly where it is to be built and to allow members of the public to express their positions to the zoning board," Lupoliansky continued. "The move is slated to help people understand that the walkway is in no way injurious and does not enter the Temple Mount. It is important to us that there is no feeling that this was done covertly or sneakily."
The decision to draft a zoning plan for the walkway is controversial: City Hall has sufficed until now with issuing permits – a rapid process – rather than demanding a broad plan, since the walkway is intended to replace an existing bridge and does not involve construction of a new structure.
The city's legal counsel has said in recent months that a building permit is sufficient, but after the mayor's discussions with Mazuz and representatives of East Jerusalem, it was decided to create a zoning procedure and allow all residents to file reservations about the project.

[128] Uzi Benziman: A la intifada comme à la intifada, in “Haaretz”-online 18.02.2007:
When the leader of the Islamic Movement's northern branch, Sheikh Raed Salah, calls for launching an intifada against Israel, he is defining the state of which he is a citizen as the enemy. Salah is urging Israeli Arabs to begin an armed revolt against their country. He thus leaves the state, and its Jewish majority, no choice but to defend themselves against him, in the spirit of the old saying "a la guerre comme a la guerre."
It could well be that this was the sheikh's intention: He wants to worsen majority-minority relations and bring them to the point of an explosion, and he has chosen to do so, predictably, by using a religious pretext. He is cynically fanning the flames of

the false accusation that Israel is harming the Temple Mount mosques, and in this way, he hopes to crown himself the guardian of Islam's holy sites in Israel.
Salah appears to be the local emissary of fundamentalist Islam; his Israeli identity is a mere fig leaf. He also has a personal score to settle with the state: Two years ago, it sent him to jail for 42 months for having been in contact with a foreign agent (after withdrawing charges of more serious security offenses that it had initially leveled against him).
From a Jewish perspective, Salah's worldview is a dangerous threat: He is harnessing popular religious sentiment to the national struggle that is still being waged between Israel and the Palestinians. His behavior joins the uncompromising "future vision" that was recently published by the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee and the appeal to United Nations organizations, lodged by the Adalah organization, to protect Israel's Arab minority. These moves reflect a genuine radicalization of both Arab Israelis' demands and their representatives' modes of action, and they arouse the Jewish reflex of self-defense. In the eyes of most of the state's Jewish citizens, Israel is a place of refuge, God's little acre that was granted to them to enable them to exist as a nation – and they have no intention of giving it up.
Thus far, most of the state's Muslim citizens have refrained from following the sheikh to his demonstrations near the Mugrabi Gate. But even if Salah's call for starting an intifada goes unanswered, the state would be making a grave mistake if it continued to rely solely on deterrent power in its relations with the Arab sector. Israel must cultivate a strong motivation among its Arab citizens so they will see themselves as part of it, and thereby neutralize the foundation of bitterness and frustration on which Sheikh Salah and his ilk build their incitement.
All Israeli governments have treated the Arab sector shamefully, and now the state is reaping the bitter fruits. Master plans are not enough to eliminate the blatant discrimination against Arab citizens, and this is all the more true of vague promises. What is needed is genuine, large-scale action, in order to instill Israel's Arabs with the feeling that the state is shaking off the inertia of the past and redefining its relationship with them, with the goal of seeing them as citizens with equal rights. This vital change must occur, first and foremost, at the conceptual and psychological level – namely, by getting rid of the view that the Arab minority is a fifth column and by accepting it as a community with its own national, organizational and cultural needs. This would naturally lead to a new practical policy with a new purpose, which would be implemented, inter alia, via legislation and budgetary allocations. Israel needed 40 years to understand that it must change its fundamental ideas in order to contribute to solving the Palestinian problem; 60 years have not sufficed for it to formulate a correct approach to the Arab minority that dwells within it.
Nevertheless, the way to respond to Salah's verbal rebellion is not by shutting his mouth. Freedom of expression is everyone's right, and aside from rare cases of blatant incitement that entail a clear and present danger of public disturbances, no one's freedom of speech should be restricted. Just as Salah's views, and lies, outrage Israel's Jewish citizens, the racist views of Avigdor Lieberman and Esterina Tartman scorch the ears of its Arab citizens. As long as Salah's fiery theories do not cross the line into a clear violation of the law, the appropriate way to handle them is through public discourse: Israel's citizens, Jews and Arabs alike, should hold a public discussion of this matter and draw their own conclusions from the state of mind this exchange of views reveals.

[129] Yehuda Ben Meir: Safeguarding Jerusalem, in „Haaretz“-online 20.02.2007:
It's become very clear that the clash over the construction work near the Mugrabi Gate is not a struggle against the archaeological excavations or the construction of a bridge, but part of a broader campaign for the control of Jerusalem. After all, this construction work has no connection to the Al-Aqsa Mosque nor any effect on it. Indeed, even among some of the Arab MKs – those same leaders mobilizing the war and the incitement against the construction – there were those who admitted, some through winks and nods and others more directly, that whether the work really threatens the mosque does not matter. In their view, Israel has no sovereignty in the Old City and has no right to carry out any sort of construction work in the Temple Mount environs.

At the root of this war is the intensifying effort by the Palestinians and their supporters, from within and without Israel, to deny any link or rights of the Jewish people to the Temple Mount or to Jerusalem, and thus to undermine not only our right to sovereignty in Jerusalem, but also Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. We have no choice but to succeed in this struggle, and possess all the possible elements for such an outcome. The way to succeed is to show and prove, by means of complete transparency, that the deceiving claims and baseless incitements are nothing more than false propaganda.
The government acted along these lines, launching a Web site with real-time, round-the-clock video footage of the excavations. Israel has finally learned to utilize the Internet. And indeed, the disorderly conduct of Sheikh Ra'ad Salah and the remonstrations of Khaled Meshal and the Islamic organizations are not having any significant effect in the broader world, and their anti-Israel campaign has failed to take off.
As part of this important effort, the prime minister agreed, during an official visit to Turkey – a large Muslim country, with strategic ties of utmost importance to Israel – to meet the request of the Turkish prime minister and allow a delegation from there to evaluate the conditions on the ground. This was a smart, wise and appropriate move on the part of the prime minister, and there is no justification for the criticism against him.
One needn't be a former deputy foreign minister or a seasoned diplomat to appreciate the diplomatic significance and the implications of such a move; let's not forget that the real dispute is over the sovereignty of Jerusalem.
The fact that the Turkish prime minister is sending a delegation to this site – near the Western Wall and the Temple Mount – following an invitation by the prime minister of Israel, is a clear expression of support of Israel's position. After all, this is not a United Nations delegation nor one imposed on Israel by an international body, but an authorized delegation of Turkey to Israel (and not of the Palestinian Authority or Jordan).
Israel really has nothing to hide. So there should be no surprise that the Arab MKs responded with anger and frustration, demanding: "What business does Turkey have with this issue?" They understood what many MKs on the right have not: that this is a diplomatic gain for Israel and a wise way of conducting an important campaign.

[130] Ben Caspit: Rice Interested in the Geneva Accord, in “Maariv”. 06.02.2007:
Negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians are planned to shortly resume, after a lengthy period in which the sides met away from public and media attention. The initiative is to be regional, under American patronage, and will include upgrading relations between Israel and Arab and Muslim countries in the region. There is also a possibility that new relations will be forged between Israel and Arab countries with which Israel has had no relations to date. Other states involved in the initiative are mainly the moderate Arab states in the region.
In this context, Rice displayed an interest in the details of the Geneva Accord, the name of which has surfaced. Rice was interested in Abu Mazen's (Abbas) taking on the Accord and also requested the opinion of the Israeli side. Apparently, Livni's side does not reject large parts of the plan, apart from the Refugees Clause which is perceived as the Foreign Minister's "baby" on which she has a relatively stern outlook.

[131] Vgl. die Eintragung am 29.01.2007 in dieser Chronologie. Anmerkung: Beide Teams der „Genfer Initiative“ haben die Büros von Ariel Sharon und Yasser Arafat regelmäßig über den Stand ihrer Gespräche informiert, um dem Verdacht des Hochverrats die Spitze abzubrechen.

[132] Alon Liel: Syria can switch camps, in „bitterlemons“ 22.02.2007:
Almost everything has changed since Israel and Syria were last involved in peace negotiations seven years ago. The Israeli-Syrian conflict still exists, but it has become only one of many hot fronts in the global war of cultures and religions. Israel clearly sides with the western/democratic world in this global confrontation, and Syria is an active member of the "axis of evil" coalition, overtly siding with Iran, Hizballah, Hamas and the other Islamic fundamentalist forces.

Seven years ago, Israel and Syria could not work out a bilateral "territories for peace" deal. Even US President Bill Clinton's personal effort did not help. Today such a deal is no longer on the agenda; a much broader one has to be worked out to fit contemporary circumstances. It can be described as "withdrawal for reorientation"- -Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights in exchange for a total reorientation of Syria's regional and global policies. Such a deal might drastically change or even put an end to the ongoing global conflict of cultures. Here is a possible scenario for how things might develop:

– Israel announces that sovereignty on the Golan Heights will be Syrian. Syria simultaneously announces that it is severing its military contacts with Iran and Hizballah, expelling Khaled Meshaal from Syria and ceasing in any way to assist the insurgents in Iraq. Actual withdrawal from the Golan does not start before these changes in Syria's policy are fully introduced. A trilateral American-Israeli-Syrian committee is established to monitor Syria's regional activities and set the withdrawal timetable accordingly.
– Once the trilateral committee acknowledges that Syria has changed its regional orientation, Israel and Syria launch peace negotiations aimed at a full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights within five to ten years.
– The sides agree that most of the Golan becomes a nature reserve. Israelis and Syrians are not allowed to reside there but are able to visit for tourist purposes and to work in those tourism, agriculture or industrial projects that both sides agree upon.
– The entire area of the Golan Heights is fully demilitarized.
– Syria may not alter the flow of water in the region; Israel is not deprived of the quantities of water it draws upon today from sources on the Golan Heights.
– Israel and Syria sign a peace treaty and establish full diplomatic ties aiming at complete normalization of relations between the two countries and peoples.
– Once Israel and Syria have signed their bilateral agreement the United States removes its embargo on Syria and reverses all relevant anti-Syrian congressional and administration decisions.
– Syria agrees to look into the possibility of granting citizenship to its Palestinian refugees; the international community takes upon itself full responsibility for their rehabilitation.

The Syrian window of opportunity is wide open. No less important is the fact that the Palestinian window looks tightly closed. The newly beautified Hamas government still does not show any sign of readiness to recognize the existence of the state of Israel. It looks unlikely that Israel will negotiate peace with a Meshaal-Haniyeh-led government. The capacity of President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) to march alone into negotiations with Israel looks even more restricted than before the recent Saudi-sponsored arrangement.

The Syrian-Iranian alliance is not a natural one for Damascus. A "territories for reorientation" agreement with Syria seems possible. It might not be a very popular deal with the relevant publics in Syria, Israel and the US, but it is the task of leaders to lead their peoples toward a better future and a better world. The popular majority in all three countries will end up supporting the agreement once it is a done deal.

[133] Gadi Blum und Nir Hefez: Ariel Scharon. Die Biografie. Hoffmann & Campe: Hamburg 2006, in der Rezension von Jörg Bremer: Mehr als ein brillanter Trick, in FAZ 06.02.2007, S. 8.

[134] Danny Rubinstein: The only way to deal with Hamas, in „Haaretz“-online 05.02.2007: There is no chance whatsoever to change Hamas. Almost all the Palestinian and Egyptian political figures involved in the attempts to achieve an agreement between the sides know this. Nevertheless, many continue to make attempts to reach an agreement about establishing a unity government that will put an end to the bloodshed in Gaza.

One of the more interesting attempts is that of the most famous Palestinian prisoner, Marwan Barghouti, who from his prison cell last week sent his associate, the former minister Qadura Faris, and his lawyer, Khader Shkirat, to Damascus for talks with Khaled Meshal and the Hamas leadership. The two returned with a new document for the nomination of the old/new prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, which Mahmoud Abbas will transfer to him. The document is to read: "I call upon you as

the prime minister of the new Palestinian government to faithfully serve the interests of the Palestinian people, to protect their rights, to maintain their achievements and to continue the work of achieving national goals, as formulated in the decisions of the Palestinian National Council (of the PLO), in the paragraphs of the Palestinian constitution and the document of national reconciliation (based on the prisoners' document singed by the Palestinian faction leaders who are jailed in Israel). Your government must observe the resolutions of the Arab summit, international decisions, and the agreements that were signed by the PLO."
On his return, Qadura Faris also presented Abu Mazen with a proposal to appoint neutral personalities – that is, individuals not identified with Hamas or Fatah – to the three key positions in the next government: foreign minister, interior minister and finance minister. It is reasonable to assume that this proposal, or variations thereof, will be brought up in the Hamas-Fatah talks this week in Mecca, as part of the Saudi Arabian mediation. The problem, of course, is that after a full year of talks and attempts to convince, the picture emerging is that it is impossible to settle the disagreements between the sides. Fatah cannot renege on the agreements of the past and retreat from its recognition of Israel. And if there was once a belief that Hamas might change and its positions would become more moderate, it is now clear that this cannot happen. As a religious movement which constitutes a kind of branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas is not able to change its positions. This has been stated many times in the past, but there are those among the Palestinian leadership who thought Hamas might show flexibility. Most of them have despaired.
The way to deal with Hamas is therefore not to try to change it but to push it to the sidelines. That is, to try to return this national-religious movement to the status and size it had before the last elections.
How can this be done? Not by the use of force. The more Israel, the United States and the rest of the world help Abu Mazen with money and weapons to defeat Hamas, the greater the chance that support for Hamas will grow. In the past few days, one could hear such things in the Palestinian street as: "We did not give Hamas a chance." When the average Gazan compares Fatah strongman, Mohammed Dahlan ("The Lion of Gaza" as his supporters call him), with Ismail Haniyeh, there is no doubt who is the more popular of the two. Dahlan, with his smart appearance and American backing, is associated with everything bad wreaked by the Palestinian Authority and the Oslo accords.
The Palestinian public will be prepared to swallow its pride, to make concessions and to support people like Dahlan and his associates only if it transpires that they can be useful and bring results.
The experience of the past has shown that only dramatic diplomatic progress has held back Hamas. Only when the political path of Abu Mazen and Fatah appears to be succeeding will it be possible for the Palestinian public to shake off Hamas and turn it once again into a minority, as it was, until the bloodshed began some six years ago.

[135] Mecca meeting: a last opportunity for reconciliation, 05.02.2007:
Bethlehem – Ma'an On Tuesday, prominent members of the rival Palestinian factions, Hamas and Fatah, will arrive in the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia for a "last opportunity" reconciliation meeting.
This meeting, taking place under Saudi royal patronage, will attempt to bridge the gap that has been widening between Fatah and Hamas over the last months in the hope to end the current chapter of dispute, which almost sent the Palestinians into a bloody civil war.
The information advisor to the Palestinian president, Nabil Amr, asserted that the Mecca meeting marks the last opportunity to accomplish a coalition government. He said the only alternative after that will be early elections and, if the Mecca meeting fails, nobody can pretend to have a pretext to not go to elections.
Amr told Ma'an that Fatah is heading to Mecca with the intention of reaching an agreement with "our Hamas brethren" over the formation of a unity government. This unity government must be qualified to lift the siege imposed on the Palestinian people and return the Palestinian cause to its natural status at the top of the international agenda.
As for the political advisor to the Palestinian Prime Minister, Dr Ahmad Yousef, he warned of the bad reflections a failure at Mecca will have on the Palestinian arena.

He told Ma'an that "everybody is counting on the Mecca meeting as the last opportunity to compose a coalition government and relieve the Palestinians who are fed up with the failure of every agreement so far". He added that Hamas is willing to make further concessions for the sake of preserving Palestinian blood and giving precedence to the higher national interests.
Yousef also claimed that all the disputed points have been finished with and the meeting in Mecca will focus on tackling the issue of reforming the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) more extensively. The political advisor also expressed his hope that the Saudi administration will exert pressure on the Europeans and Americans to end the blockade they are imposing on the Palestinian people and government.
Yousef also said that he expects a coalition government to be declared and composed in Mecca, as long as an agreement is reached regarding the controversial issues.
Heading to Mecca in the Hamas delegation are Hamas politburo head, Khalid Mash'al, Mousa Abu Marzouq, Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and Interior Minister Dr Mahmoud Zahhar.
The Fatah delegation will comprise of President Mahmoud Abbas; his information advisor, Nabil Amr; the head of the Fatah bloc in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), Azzam Al-Ahmad; PLC member Muhammad Dahlan; PLO's negotiations chief, Dr Saeb Erekat; in addition to Samir Mashharawi, Abu Maher Hillis and Rawhi Fattuh.

[136] Julian Bogner: Prominent Jews call for open debate on Israel, in The Guardian2 02.02.2007:
A group of prominent British Jews will today declare independence from the country's Jewish establishment, arguing that it puts support for Israel above the human rights of Palestinians.
Independent Jewish Voices will publish an open letter on the Guardian's Comment is Free website calling for a freer debate about the Middle East within the Jewish community. Among the more than 130 signatories are Stephen Fry, Harold Pinter, Mike Leigh, Jenny Diski and Nicole Farhi, as well as leading academics such as Eric Hobsbawm and Susie Orbach.
"We come together in the belief that the broad spectrum of opinion among the Jewish population of this country is not reflected by those institutions which claim authority to represent the Jewish community as a whole," the letter says. Jewish leaders in Britain, it argues "put support for the policies of an occupying power above the human rights of an occupied people" in conflict with Jewish principles of justice and compassion.
The statement does not name the institutions it is criticising. But one signatory, Brian Klug, an Oxford philosopher, writing an accompanying article on Comment is Free, singles out the Board of Deputies of British Jews for calling itself "the voice of British Jewry" while devoting "much of the time and resources of its international division to the defence of Israel".
Mr Klug also criticises Britain's chief rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks, for telling a pro-Israeli rally in London last year: "Israel, you make us proud."
"Others felt roughly the opposite emotion," Mr Klug writes.
The emergence of the group, which calls itself a "network of individuals" and can be found at www.ijv.org.uk comes at a time of ferment over attitudes towards Israel, stoked by the war in Lebanon and the bloodshed in the occupied territories. The question of whether radical opposition to Israeli policies necessarily amounts to anti-Semitism is central to the debate.
The row was brought to a head in recent weeks by the resignation of board members of the Institute of Jewish Policy Research (IJPR) after it emerged that its director, Antony Lerman, had voiced support for the merging of Israel with the Palestinian territories into a single bi-national federation and a repeal of the "law of return" giving the right of anyone of Jewish descent to Israeli citizenship.
Stanley Kalms, the former head of the Dixons Group, stepped down as the IJPR's honorary vice president, saying Mr Lerman's views made his position "untenable".
Writing in the Jewish Chronicle, Lord Kalms called his views "dangerous and unacceptable" and "contrary to my concept of the role of the diaspora – to support the State of Israel, warts and all".

The row has brought furious exchanges to the Jewish Chronicle's letter pages. "Some of our biggest mailbags lately have been prompted by prominent Jewish public figures voicing dissenting views of Israel, which typically provokes angry rebukes from other members of the community," David Rowan, the editor, said.
A parallel struggle is under way in the US where the American Jewish Committee published an article accusing liberal Jews such as the historian Tony Judt of fuelling anti-Semitism by questioning Israel's right to exist. The essay by Alvin Rosenfeld said that "one of the most distressing features of the new anti-Semitism" was "the participation of Jews alongside it".
Prof Judt told the New York Times: "The link between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism is newly created." He feared the two would become so conflated that references to anti-Semitism and the Holocaust would be seen as "just a political defence of Israeli policy".

[137] Ruth Rach: Britische Juden: "Wir sind nicht damit einverstanden" http://www.dw-world.de/, 09. März 2007:
Die israelische Politik stößt bei britischen Juden zunehmend auf Kritik. Mehrere hundert von ihnen, darunter viele Prominente, haben eine Protesterklärung unterzeichnet.
Im Rathaus von Hampstead im Norden Londons drängen sich Hunderte von Menschen. Die Atmosphäre ist gespannt. In der jüdischen Gemeinde in Großbritannien hat die Grundsatz-Erklärung der „Independent Jewish Voices" erbitterte Kontroversen ausgelöst. Die „Unabhängigen Jüdischen Stimmen" fordern Frieden, Sicherheit und Menschenrechte für Juden und Palästinenser. Dies ist ihr erster öffentlicher Auftritt.
„Es ist höchste Zeit, dass Juden laut sagen: ›Wir sind nicht damit einverstanden, was in unserem Namen im Nahen Osten geschieht‹", erklärt einer der Anwesenden. Beifälliges Nicken.
„Nicht eine, sondern viele Stimmen"
Die Liste der Gründungsmitglieder der „Jewish Independent Voices" liest sich wie ein Who's Who prominenter jüdischer Intellektueller, Schriftsteller und Künstler in Großbritannien: Harold Pinter, Eric Hobsbawn, Susie Orbach, Stephen Fry. Organisator des Treffens ist der Historiker Donald Sassoon. Er unterstreicht, die neue Initiative verstehe sich als Plattform für einen offenen Dialog: „Es stimmt nicht, dass alle Juden die Politik der israelischen Regierung unterstützen. Die jüdische Gemeinde hat nicht eine, sondern viele Stimmen." Darunter seien Zionisten, Antizionisten, religiöse und nicht religiöse Ansichten zu finden. Mindestens 15 Länder gebe es, so Sassoon, in denen Juden ähnliche Diskussionsforen geschaffen haben: „Wir haben Emails aus Australien, aus den USA und natürlich auch viel Zuspruch aus Israel bekommen."
Schlecht vertreten durch die Deputiertenkammer
Traditionell gilt die jüdische Deputiertenkammer als das Sprachrohr britischer Juden. Sie besteht aus Vertretern jüdischer Gruppen und Synagogen. Die Deputiertenkammer stellt sich im Namen der britischen Juden voll hinter die Politik der israelischen Regierung – zu Unrecht, findet Donald Sasoon. Er sieht eine Parallele zur Situation britischer Muslime. Auch sie klagen, dass der britische muslimische Dachverband ihre Interessen und Ansichten nicht widerspiegle. Auch sie werden als Verräter beschimpft, wenn sie es wagen, ihre eigene Gemeinschaft zu kritisieren.
Die Diskussion im Rathaus von Hampstead dreht sich inzwischen um UN-Resolutionen und israelische Menschenrechtsverletzungen. Ein Reizthema, wie sich herausstellt. Neil Singer, ein Herr im Publikum, verteidigt die jüdische Deputiertenkammer. Und die israelische Regierung.
„Ihr schaut den Tatsachen nicht ins Auge", wirft er den Anwesenden vor: „Wir Juden schweben alle in Gefahr. Und ob es euch gefällt oder nicht: Unsere Situation ist sicherer, eben weil Israel existiert." Beifall brandet auf, Buhrufe erschallen.
„Israel kämpft euren Kampf, israelische Kinder kämpfen für eure Sicherheit", schiebt der Redner nach.
„Emotionale Erpressung"
Ebenfalls im Publikum: Ein ehemaliger israelischer Kampfpilot, der wegen seiner Weigerung, palästinensische Dörfer zu bombardieren, entlassen wurde. Er schäme sich, solche Worte zu hören, sagt er. Dies sei emotionale Erpressung.

Nah-Ost-Experte Tony Klug fordert Abstand, und einen Sinn für historische Perspektiven. Keine Seite dürfe verteufelt werden: „Was 1948 nach dem Holocaust und nach den doppelzüngigen Machenschaften der Verbündeten eine Befreiung für ein gequältes Volk war, war eine Katastrophe für ein anderes."
Forderung nach internationalem Druck auf Israel
Im Herzen der Debatte steht stets die Frage nach der jüdischen Identität. Die Literaturwissenschaftlerin Jacqueline Rose warnt, Juden dürften sich nicht allein aus ihrer Geschichte definieren. Opfer könnten eine fatale Tätermentalität entwickeln, die alle Handlungen rechtfertige – auch Verstöße gegen das Menschenrecht. „Wir sind besorgt über eine Atmosphäre, in der praktisch kein internationaler Druck auf Israel ausgeübt wird", sagt Rose. Man wolle einen Raum schaffen für die wachsende Anzahl von Stimmen, die nicht damit einverstanden sind, dass Israel in ihrem Namen spreche.
Der Abend geht lebhaft, aber friedlich zu Ende. In den USA wäre so ein Treffen viel hitziger verlaufen, sagt Paul Auerbach, amerikanischer Jude und langjähriger Wahlbrite. Auch er hat die „Independent Jewish Voices" unterzeichnet. Aber nicht, weil er Jude ist, sondern weil er die rationale Lösung eines – wie er es nennt – „internationalen politischen Problems" fordert. Der Gedanke, dass ihm ein spezifisch ethnisches Label verpasst werde, sei für ihn absurd und unangenehm, sagt Auerbach: „Aber letztendlich bin ich mit den Zielen der Petition einverstanden. Deshalb beschloss ich, sie trotzdem zu unterschreiben."

[138] Vgl. die Eintragungen am 16. und 23.01.2007 in dieser Chronologie.

[139] Conclusions of the meeting of Hamas and Fatah in the Gaza Strip revealed 03.02. 2007:
Gaza – Ma'an – On Saturday evening the Hamas and Fatah movements agreed to withdraw their gunmen from the streets of the Gaza Strip. The agreement followed a meeting at the headquarters of the Egyptian embassy and under the patronage of the Egyptian security delegation who are staying in the Gaza Strip. The agreement comprises of seven points as follows:
1. Immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of gunmen from the streets and towers, in addition to the removal of all checkpoints that were erected in response to the latest events.
2. Palestinian police to patrol the streets and maintain security in all regions of the Gaza Strip, especially Gaza City where there have been fierce clashes. 3. Immediate release of all hostages, from both sides, including those being detained by the security forces.
4. Urgent session to be held to follow-up agreements.
5. Both movements affirmed that any targeting of the security forces, Palestinian citizens, or institutions is "ugly" and condemned, and those committing such offences will be tried.
6. Both movements pledge to support the ministry of interior's decisions regarding domestic law.
7. All media, especially local, is to be called upon to stop publishing negative statements and end incitement and provocation.

[140] Quartet Statement, Washington, D.C., February 2, 2007:
The Quartet Principals … met today in Washington to discuss the situation in the Middle East…
Recognizing the critical need to end the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, which would contribute to security and stability in the region, the Quartet pledged to support efforts to put in place a process with the goal of ending the occupation that began in 1967 and creating an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian state, living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel, and reaffirmed its commitment to a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace based on UNSCs 242 und 338.
The Quartet expressed the hope that the result-oriented dialogue initiated between Israeli and Palestinian leaders will continue in the framework of a renewed political process with the aim of launching meaningful negotiations.
The Quartet undertook to give active follow-up to these meetings and to remain closely engaged at this moment of increased activity and dialogue. The Quartet reaffirmed its commitment to meet regularly at both the principles and envoys level

according to an agreed calendar, including with the parties and other regional partners, to monitor developments and actions taken by the parties and to discuss the way ahead.
The Quartet noted its support for renewed dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian leaders and welcomed the December 23 meeting Israeli PM Olmert and P President Abbas, and the subsequent implementation of some steps at that meeting. The Quartet urged the parties to implement fully steps discussed at the December 23 meeting, to refrain from taking any measures that could predetermine the number of issues that will be resolved in negotiations, to meet their respective obligations under phase one of the Roadmap and under the Agreement on Movement and Access, and to seek to fulfil their obligations under the Sharm el-Sheikh Understandings of 2005.
The Quartet discussed U.S. efforts to U:S. efforts to facilitate discussions between the parties. The Quartet welcomed the upcoming meeting between Prime Minister Olmert, President Abbas, and Secretary of State Rice, that could begin to define more clearly the political horizon for the Palestinian people, and held engender a sense of partnership. The Quartet affirmed the primacy of the Roadmap, and welcomed U.S. efforts to accelerate progress on the Roadmap.
The Quartet noted the continuing importance of the Arab Peace Initiative, particularly its reflection of a shared commitment to a two-state-solution.
The Quartet reiterated its call for an immediate and unconditional end of all acts of violence and terror. It condemned the suicide bombing in Eilat on 29 January and called once again for an immediate end to all rocket attacks against Israel.
The Quartet expressed its deep concern at the violence among Palestinians and called for respect for law and order.
The Quartet called for continued international assistance to the Palestinian people, and encouraged donors to focus on preserving and building the capacity of institutions of Palestinian governance as well as the development of the Palestinian economy. The Quartet welcomed international efforts to reform the Palestinian security sector and thus to help improve law and order for the Palestinian people. It called for the Temporary International Mechanism [of January 2006] to be further developed to support the political process, to identify suitable projects for international support in the areas of governance, institution building and economic development, and urged other members of the international community to consider practical support to the parties.
The Quartet called for Palestinian unity in support of a government committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including Roadmap. The Quartet reaffirmed that these principles endure. The Quartet reiterated its call for the PA government to commit to these principles.

[141] [February 4, 2007:] In response to the statement issued by the Middle East Quartet on Friday (2 February 2007), Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni issues the following statement:
The statement issued by the Middle East Quartet is a reconfirmation of the principles embodied in the unequivocal requirements demanded from the extremists and terror organizations – renunciation of violence and terrorism, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements, including the Roadmap – while at the same time strengthening and conducting a dialogue with the moderates in order to maintain a political horizon of peace and preserving security. Taking a firm stand against the extremists while reinforcing the moderates are measures that complement one another and represent the correct course of action.

[142] Ziad Asali: Bridging the Desert: The Middle East in the Next Decade, World Affairs Council of America, February 1–4, 2007:
The Palestine/Israel conflict has been a defining feature of the global political landscape for decades. Its resolution would present a major challenge to the status quo and those who benefit from it. It also would badly damage the careers of the legions of Middle East experts the world over.
These experts have talked about us being at a crossroads with regard to resolving this issue and done so every year of every decade in every conference about this

conflict. It is my misfortune to state, at this conference, that we are yet again at a crossroads, and perhaps this time it is for real.
The Iraq War has removed the fortress that separated the Arab World, with its historical Sunni political dominance, from Persian Iran the exclusively Shiite state. With assets in Iraq and in the Syrian regime, Iran flexed its muscles this summer through its ally, Hezbollah in Lebanon and in Palestine through its new alliance with the Sunni Hamas.
Both alliances were cemented by a fight against Israel and presented a major intrusion of Iran in the Arab world in a bid to go over the heads of Arab governments and own the Palestine issue with all its attendant symbolism. Iran has emerged as a regional super power in the Middle East and is defiantly challenging the only global super power.
The moderate Arab regimes, Israel, and Mahmoud Abbas in Palestine find themselves on the side of the United States and at odds with Iran and its proxies. It can hardly be expected after decades of wars and deep rooted hostility to create a coalition between the Arab States and Israel to counter the threat of a Muslim nation, albeit Shiite.
The only way this coalition would be thinkable would be to move with dispatch to bring the Palestine Israel conflict closer to a resolution. Recent events have rendered the creation of such a state more achievable because it fits in with a global and regional strategy to build a coalition against extremism.
It falls upon this Administration, which still has two years of service, to seize the opportunity created by the confluence of the interests of various nations: It is in the national interest of the United States, moderate Arab States and that of Israel to contain Iran, its proxies and militant religious Shiite or Sunni movements.
It is also in the national interest of the Palestinians to have their own viable, independent state on land occupied in 1967. These are the ingredients of a historic compromise.
Our immediate challenge is to translate policy into politics. A partnership needs to be forged between Palestinian and Israeli leaderships under an American umbrella. Unfortunately, all three political systems suffer at the moment from deep fragmentations and serious internal strains.
At a time that calls for decisive leadership, we find leaders who lack public support. It remains to be seen whether weak leaders can enhance their positions as they slowly move forward on this issue.
Although the parties to the Palestine/ Israel conflict have never come close enough to sign an agreement, there has emerged over decades an international consensus which calls for two states with mutually acceptable borders based on 1967. However, tribal fault lines that block its realization linger just below the surface. Should we fail in this crucial year or two to make progress on the national struggle between Israel and Palestine the conflict may yet be redefined solely as a Holy War that will cast its shadow far beyond the first decade of this century.
The United States, as a strategic partner to the Palestinians and Israelis, and a coordinator of the other regional partners committed to a peaceful Middle East, has to learn from its experience to be a more effective partner. It should aim to end this conflict- neither to manage it, nor to out-source it, nor to let it fester.
Imposing solutions, pressuring partners, or yielding to the more belligerent players are all traps to be avoided. The mechanisms, time lines and the gentle and not so gentle nudges have to be guided by a benign vision of the end game- one that neither party would ardently embrace nor utterly reject.
This end game will be a variation on the themes of Taba, Geneva Accord, The Arab League Initiative, and the June 24, 2002 Speech of President Bush of June 24, 2002. The envisioned regional coalition will give new relevance to the Arab League Initiative.
The Palestinians and Israelis must negotiate on their own behalf, with the guiding and gentle American hand keeping them on task. The ultimate task is to end the conflict.
The United States' role is indispensable not because it is an honest broker but because it is the only power that can be effective, both in dealing with the two parties as well as with other significant players whose input and support is crucial. People should disabuse themselves of the illusion that anyone but the United States can play this role.

A trilateral meeting is now set between Secretary Rice, the point person assigned for this mission by the President, and President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert. Their meeting will, appropriately, take place after her meetings with the Quartet and with representatives of Arab Leaders. Formal negotiations at this trilateral level need to be institutionalized.
A successful conclusion of the initial meetings would be an agreement on the principle of a partnership, and establishing guidelines and mechanisms that govern the partnership and its objectives.
Negotiations, especially those involving two leaders with serious internal challenges, will benefit by setting a low level of expectations. The advantage of the fact that meetings and negotiations will stretch over a period of time is that we can put this time to good use by preparing the Israeli and Palestinian public to bridge the gaps between their expectations and reality.
This can be best accomplished by engaging in public discussions about the issues to be negotiated to convince the skeptical people of the seriousness of the exercise. Leaders, who are politicians, will lead with more confidence if they sense the support of their public no matter what their political opponents say.
Israel, whose dysfunctional political system is saved by a functional legal system, needs to come to terms with the need to end the occupation. Eretz Israel and the religious or mythical impulse that drove it must come to terms with the reality of its un-sustainability. Indeed the whole range of issues to be negotiated between Israeli and Palestinian officials in confidence need to become subjects of public debate. These include the future of the settlements, the policy of humiliation of the Palestinians, the grinding and restrictive realities of imprisonments, checkpoints and impoverishment. Discussion needs to take place about ways to transition all of these back to normalcy.
Innovative and bold ideas have to be aired and discussed publicly about the future of Jerusalem, borders, and the refugees as well as the future relations of Israel at peace with the Palestinian and with all other Arab States.
Securing the future of an Israel that lives in peace and not only by the sword is a goal that would be enhanced by creating a partnership with the secure state of Palestine. The present relations between the Jewish people and the German people teach us that historic animosities, no matter how brutal and gruesome, are not insurmountable and eternal obstacles to reconciliation and accommodation.
It should be thinkable, that the lifting of the humiliation and its manifestation against the Palestinians coincides with a campaign for a more measured and serious public debate in responsible media across the Arab world on issues related to Israel and to the Jewish people.
The Palestinians must define what they want. Their system is dysfunctional and they are hopelessly divided and presently engaged in an intermittent civil war. They have to clearly make a choice between two visions: A negotiated viable, contiguous, sovereign state of Palestine established on agreed upon 67 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. One that secures the rights of the refugees based on international legality, offering them citizenship right to live in Palestine, providing them opportunities to live elsewhere if they so choose, affording them full compensation for their losses and offering them an apology for their original losses. In exchange, they have to accept the painful fact that the vast majority of the four or five million refugees will not go back to their homes, to villages and towns that exist no longer. The United Nations, which dispossessed the Palestinians by a resolution that created Israel in 1947, should pass a resolution to establish Palestine and offer to set up the package and mechanisms for compensation and resettlement. It should also offer its own apology to the refugees it helped create.
Arab East Jerusalem must be the capital of Palestine or the conflict will not be ended. Religious feelings raging in the hearts of too many people in the world will see to that.
The other vision facing the Palestinians, and the one that appeals to their victim hood, calls for liberating all the land of Palestine in time by force. It is the one advocated these days primarily by militant Islamic parties. It carries the apocalyptic vision of repetitive wars that would ultimately lead to destruction of unimaginable scale, one that the bulk of the Israelis and Palestinians, and many others, may not survive.

In the short run, this vision promises no relief from the occupation and its misery for the Palestinians, no matter what it promises to deliver in the long run.
For the Palestinians to decide between these two visions they must believe that the goal of a viable Palestinian state is indeed achievable. A tiny minority of Palestinians and others clamors for one state. Theirs is a voice of frustration that settlement expansion has already made a viable Palestine unattainable. Their argument will carry weight if it is not answered appropriately through a negotiated agreement.
The Palestinians are justified in their skepticism as they look at the settlements, walls and fences, exclusive roads and witness and suffer the consequences of an unbroken record of broken promises.
Palestinian belief that the option of a viable state is real will be enhanced immeasurably if they experience a palpable and speedy improvement in the reality of their daily lives and if they believe that it is part of a political horizon. Political dividends will accrue to Palestinian leaders who advocate this vision in direct proportion to the improvement of the people's lives. No better tool than this would deprive extremists from a political base and fresh recruits.
President Abbas must outline his vision for the nature and the character of the state and campaign for it. A vision of a constitutional, secular, pluralistic state based on respect for the rule of law.
In order to be effective he must provide an answer to the central question thrown at him and at all moderates: what benefits has moderation brought us? It is in his hand but also, and just as importantly, in the hands of others who would be his partners, to provide an acceptable answer.
It is his obligation to clean up the system that he inherited, but he now leads, to reform and to provide accountability, safety, and respect for the rule of law and its strict enforcement.
It is the obligation of others to help him deliver to his people what he alone could not do: more freedom, mobility and prosperity with a viable state at the end of the road.
A competition for the hearts and minds of the Palestinian people to choose between two visions is under way: one is looking for a future of a viable free state and the other is yearning for the past to avenge injured dignity and to continue the fight.
It is the collective responsibility of all those who are serious about ending this conflict to shoulder their responsibility to work together to end it in our time.
Palestine is the ultimate symbol and winning its mind and soul will determine the future of the Middle East, perhaps world peace, for decades to come.

[143] M.J. Rosenberg: Holocaust 2, in "Israel Public Forum" 02.02.2007:
You know you are in trouble when it takes former Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to dispel some of the gloom about the Iranian nuclear threat to Israel. But that is what happened at last month's Herzliya Conference on National Security. The annual conference has become the most prestigious venue in Israel for discussions of Israeli and global security by high-ranking political leaders, military figures and academics.
Netanyahu said: "I am optimistic, and my optimism is not baseless, because I understand our capabilities…."
His remarks (surprising coming from someone who regularly utilizes apocalyptic rhetoric about Iran) were a dose of reality in a political scene that has become increasingly dominated by gloom-and-doom fantasies replete with references to the imminence of a second Holocaust.
The fear, of course, is that Iran is on the verge of producing nuclear weapons and will, if in possession of them, use them almost immediately to destroy Israel.
Netanyahu's statement was a reminder that Israel is far from helpless. It is a strong military power and, although he would not say this in so many words, reportedly has 200 atomic weapons of its own.
A nuclear attack on Israel by anyone would be suicidal and there are few, if any, governments in the world that would be willing to sacrifice millions of its own people to eliminate its enemies. (Those who argue that Iranians or Muslims in general – unlike Westerners – would happily see their cities destroyed and their children consumed in a nuclear jihad are talking nonsense. The Mullahs themselves are

calculating and dangerous; they are not suicidal. And it is they, not Pres. Ahmadinejad, who call the shots).
Nevertheless, Israel's powerful deterrent is continually being downplayed by those who insist that the Israeli state is essentially as vulnerable as the Jews of Europe were in 1939.
Of the dozens of articles and speeches which express that fear, one stands out. It is by Benny Morris, one of Israel's top historians who made his name by exploring the origins of the Palestinian refugee problem. He is no right-winger (although he has moved rightward lately) which makes his words especially significant.
In an essay in the "Jerusalem Post," called "This Holocaust Will Be Different," Morris offers this prediction.
"One bright morning, in five or 10 years, perhaps during a regional crisis, perhaps out of the blue, a day or a year or five years after Iran's acquisition of the Bomb, the mullahs in Qom will convene in secret session, under a portrait of the steely-eyed Ayatollah Khomeini, and give President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, by then in his second or third term, the go-ahead.
"The orders will go out and the Shihab III and IV missiles will take off for Tel Aviv, Beersheba, Haifa and Jerusalem, and probably some military sites, including Israel's half dozen air and (reported) nuclear missile bases….
"With a country the size and shape of Israel (an elongated 20,000 square kilometers), probably four or five hits will suffice: No more Israel. "
For Morris, this horrific denouement is the result of policy choices that have already been made. "The buildup to the second holocaust (which, incidentally, in the end, will probably claim roughly the same number of lives as the first) has seen an international community fragmented and driven by separate, selfish appetites – Russia and China obsessed with Muslim markets; France with Arab oil – and the United States driven by the debacle in Iraq into a deep isolationism. Iran has been left free to pursue its nuclear destiny and Israel and Iran to face off alone."
The most distressing part of Morris's analysis (or prophecy) is its utter fatalism. "America will do nothing. Iran will get the bomb. Iran will use it on Israel. Israel will be destroyed. It's all inevitable." He does not even propose ways for Israel to avert this catastrophe.
Like most of the gloom-and-doom school, Morris believes that the only thing motivating Iranian policy is the desire to eliminate Israel. But Iran's dangerous game of nuclear brinksmanship is about much more than Israel. In fact, it is primarily about the United States. That is why many believe that negotiations would be productive. In negotiations with the United States, Iran can demand recognition and security guarantees from Washington while we can demand an end to nuclear bomb development, an end to their meddling in Iraq, an end to support of Hezbollah and endorsement of negotiations as a means to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
This is why American politicians are not jumping on the war-is-the-only-option bandwagon. As former Senator John Edwards recommended in his speech at Herzliyah. "Under no circumstances can Iran be allowed to have nuclear weapons." We "need to support direct engagement with the Iranians….It is a mistake strategically to avoid engagement with Iran."
Or as Sen. Hillary Clinton says: "We have to keep all options on the table, including being ready to talk directly to Iranians should the right opportunity present itself. Direct talks, if they do nothing else, lets you assess who's making the decisions – what their stated and unstated goals might be. And willingness to talk sends two very important messages. First, to the Iranian people, that our quarrel is with their leaders, not with them; and second, to the international community, that we are pursuing every available peaceful avenue to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power."
But the gloom and doomers disagree. Moderate Israeli writers Yossi Klein Halevi and Michael B. Oren wrote, in a story in last week's New Republic that "negotiations between the West and Iran….would be the worst of all options." Why? Because the timing is wrong. "The time to have negotiated with Iran…was immediately after the initial U.S. triumph in Iraq, not now, when the United States is losing the war. Under these circumstances, negotiations would only buy the regime time to continue its nuclear program."
For me, the most offensive aspect of the gloom-and-doom scenario is how antithetical that analysis is to the fundamental tenets of Zionism. The purpose of

Zionism was to establish a strong sanctuary for Jews in the historic homeland. That sanctuary exists. Israel is, according to the analysts, the 4th strongest military power in the world and it is a nuclear power.
Pretending that Israel's situation in 2007 is like that of the Jews of Europe in 1939 is absurd and a desecration of the memory of the Six Million. Would anyone argue that the Holocaust would have taken place if Polish Jews had both nuclear weapons and a way to deliver them to Berlin? Of course not.
It was Jewish powerlessness that made the Holocaust possible, powerlessness that ended following Israel's establishment, the advent of the Israel Defense Forces and the development of Israel's nuclear deterrent.
If the existence of a militarily strong nuclear Israel, a nation 6 million strong, with an army second to none, has left Jews in as precarious a situation as 60 years ago, then Zionism was a failure and the existence of Israel is fundamentally worthless.
As a lifelong Zionist, I obviously do not accept that premise. Having come of age following the Six Day War, I simply cannot buy into the idea that Israel cannot accomplish what it needs to in order to secure its survival. Those who argue otherwise have either given up on Israel or are trying to scare either the fellow Israelis or Americans into a military strike at Iran before all other options have been tried.
Enough is enough. If we have learned anything from the Iraq war or the summer war on Israel's northern border, it should be that wars, no matter what the intention of their architects, have unintended consequences and sometimes unimaginable ones.
Those who hold out the terrifying image of Israel reduced to dust by Iran as a means to produce a willy-nilly rush to war could, perversely, be setting the scene for the catastrophe they most fear. The gift of prophecy can be a wonderful thing if it helps avert disaster. However, the ritualistic invoking of the Holocaust, the suggestion that Israel is militarily helpless, and self-fulfilling prophecies of doom, are deeply offensive – except of course to one Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Can't you just see him as he reads Benny Morris, the Herzliyah transcripts, and the New Republic cover story? I can. And he's laughing. *MJ Rosenberg is the Director of Israel Policy Forum's Washington Policy Center. If you have colleagues or friends who would appreciate receiving this weekly letter, or you would like to unsubscribe, send an e-mail to: ipfdc@ipforumdc.org*

[144] Joschka Fischer: And now Iran, in „Haaretz"-online 02.02.2007:
Can politics learn from history? Or is it subject to a fatal compulsion to repeat the same mistakes, despite the disastrous lessons of the past? President Bush's new strategy for Iraq has posed anew this age-old philosophical and historical question. Ostensibly, the president has embarked on a new political and military strategy for war-torn Iraq. Bush's new course can be summarized under three headings: more American troops, more Iraqi responsibility and more U.S. training for more Iraqi troops.
If you apply this new plan to Iraq alone, two things immediately catch the eye: Almost all the proposals of the Baker-Hamilton report have been ignored, and the plan itself – in the face of the chaos in Iraq – is quite simplistic. In light of the failure of all previous "new strategies" for stabilizing Iraq, there is little to suggest that the newest "new strategy" will succeed any better, despite the additional 21,000 U.S. soldiers.
What is interesting and really new in the U.S. administration's recently announced policy is the way it reaches beyond Iraq, to deal with Iran, Syria and the Gulf states. Here, unexpected and genuinely new decisions have been announced: An additional U.S. aircraft carrier group will be moved to the Persian Gulf; Patriot anti-aircraft missiles will be stationed in the Gulf states; and the additional 21,000 soldiers far exceed what the American generals had asked for to deal with Iraq. So one wonders about the purpose of this military build-up. One might almost think that Saddam was still alive and in power, so his overthrow had to be prepared all over again.
The surprise of Bush's new policy is its shift of political focus from Iraq to its two immediate neighbors. Bush accuses Syria and Iran of interfering in Iraq, threatening its territorial integrity and endangering American troops, and, more generally, of seeking to undermine America's allies in the region. If you add to this the seizure,

on President Bush's orders, of Iranian "diplomats" by U.S. forces in the northern Iraqi town of Erbil, a completely new picture of the president's plan comes to the fore: The "new strategy" does not follow the advice of the Baker-Hamilton report, but harks back to the disastrous strategy of the neocons. Iran is now in the superpower's sights, and the U.S. approach brings to mind the preparatory phase of the Iraq war – down to the last detail.
Where does all this lead? Basically, there are two possibilities, one positive and one negative. Unfortunately, the positive outcome appears to be the less likely one.
If the threat of force – a force that the U.S. is quite obviously building – aims at preparing the ground for serious negotiations with Iran, there can and should be no objection. If, on the other hand, it represents an attempt to prepare the American public for a war against Iran, and a genuine intention to unleash such a war when the opportunity arises, the outcome would be an unmitigated disaster.
Unfortunately, this danger is all too real. Since the Bush administration views Iran's nuclear program and hegemonic aspirations as the major threat to the region, its new strategy is based on a newly formed, undeclared anti-Iranian alliance with moderate Sunni Arab states and Israel. The nuclear program is the dynamic factor here, because it will set a timeline for action.
But air strikes on Iran, which America may see as a military solution, would not make Iraq safer; they would achieve exactly the opposite. Nor would the region as a whole be stabilized; on the contrary, it would be plunged into an abyss. And the dream of "regime change" in Tehran would not come true, either; rather, Iran's democratic opposition would pay a high price, and the theocratic regime would only become stronger.
The political options for stabilizing Iraq, and the whole region, as well as for securing a long-term freeze of Iran's nuclear program, have not yet been exhausted. The current state of Iran's nuclear program does not call for immediate military action. Instead, the focus should be on diplomatic efforts to detach Syria from Iran and isolate the Tehran regime. But this presupposes American willingness to return to diplomacy and to talking to all the parties involved. Tehran is afraid of regional and international isolation. Moreover, the recent municipal elections in Iran have shown that betting on diplomacy and a transformation of Iran from within is a realistic option. So why the current threats against Iran?
The debacle in Iraq was foreseeable from the beginning, and America's numerous partners and friends predicted it quite clearly in their warnings to the Bush administration. The mistake that the U.S. may be about to make is equally predictable: A war that is wrong will not be made right by extending it – that is the lesson of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.
The ideologically driven strategy of regime change by means of military force led the U.S. into the Iraq war disaster. Getting into Iraq and defeating Saddam was easy. But today, America is stuck there and knows neither how to win, nor how to get out. A mistake is not corrected by repeating it over and over again. Perseverance in error does not correct the error; it merely exacerbates it.
Following the launch of the new American policy, the old question of whether politics can learn from history will be answered again in the Middle East. Whatever the answer, the consequences – whether good or bad – will be far-reaching.

[145] Wolfgang Günter Lerch: Musiker der Hoffnung. Lobrede auf Daniel Barenboim aus Anlass der Verleihung des Hessischen Friedenspreises 2006 am 1. Februar 2007:
Die Situation im Nahen Osten erscheint heute vielen als Paradigma für politische Ausweglosigkeit. Ein unheilvoller Rhythmus von Optimismus und Verzweiflung durchzieht die jüngste Geschichte dieser für die menschliche Kultur, für Religion und Geistesgeschichte so bedeutenden Weltregion, immer wieder unterbrochen von blutigen Gewalttaten und Kriegen, die doch den Konfliktknoten niemals gelöst haben. Zuletzt hatte der Osloer Friedensprozess in aller Welt verständliche Erwartungen und sehnsüchtige Hoffnungen geweckt, bis er, durch die Schuld und das Versagen vieler, ins Stocken geriet, schließlich zum Stillstand kam und in neue Katastrophen mündete – in die zweite Intifada, in den Libanonkrieg des vergangenen Sommers und in den jüngsten palästinensischen Machtkampf, der jetzt an einen regelrechten Bürgerkrieg erinnert. Für Beobachter dieser Ereignisse liegt es nahe, irgendwann in eine Dauerdepression zu verfallen; oder auch, im

schlimmsten Fall, zum Zyniker zu werden. Gerade der Journalist, der diese Dialektik von Hoffnung und Verzweiflung immer aufs Neue erfährt, ist gegen solche Versuchungen nicht gefeit.
Zu denen, die sich davon nicht beirren lassen, die *nicht* in Verzweiflung oder Lethargie verfallen, gehört der Künstler, der heute geehrt wird. Daniel Barenboim, der weltbekannte Musiker, der weltbürgerliche, in Argentinien gebürtige Israeli lässt sich durch die Ungunst der Verhältnisse und den allgemein vorherrschenden Pessimismus nicht entmutigen, sondern setzt Zeichen, wo andere aufgeben. Sein israelisch-palästinensisches Engagement, seine Freundschaft mit dem – im Jahre 2004 leider allzu früh verstorbenen – palästinensischen Gelehrten und politischen Aktivisten Edward Said, sein Musizieren mit dem Westöstlichen Diwan-Orchester, das israelische und arabische Musiker vereint, seine multikulturellen workshops setzen Hoffnungen darauf, dass das weltumspannende Humanum der Kunst, der Musik zumal, ein günstiges Klima schaffen könne für eine politische Annäherung zweier Völker, die politisch in Gegnerschaft, ja Feindschaft verharren. Dieses Engagement Daniel Barenboims ist ein Zeichen, das als ein bewusster Willensakt jener **„Genfer Friedensinitiative“** des Jahres 2003 gleicht, die ebenfalls deutlich machen sollte, dass viele Dinge möglich sind, wenn man sie nur will; das heißt: wenn sie von einem Drang zum wechselseitigen Verständnis und von einem ehrlichen Streben nach Empathie, ungeachtet aller Widersprüche und Gegensätze, getragen werden. Der Mangel daran, an Empathie, ist ja eines der wichtigsten Hindernisse für eine Regelung des Nahost-Konflikts überhaupt: Zu wenige Israelis interessieren sich dafür, was ein Araber ist, und zu wenige Palästinenser sind mit Israel und seinen Menschen vertraut; stattdessen hört man auf die altbekannten Stereotypen, Verschwörungsformeln und Vorurteile – und zwar auf beiden Seiten. Diese Mauer der Unkenntnis und der wechselseitigen Verweigerung will Barenboim mit seinem unkonventionellen Handeln durchstoßen, und zwar sowohl auf intellektuellem wie auf emotionalem Gebiet. Dazu schrieb Edward Said: „Barenboim ist keineswegs in erster Linie ein politischer Mensch, doch hat er nie ein Hehl daraus gemacht, dass er wenig mit Israels Besatzungspolitik anfangen kann. Deshalb war er auch im Frühjahr 1999 der erste Israeli, der sich dazu erbot, in der Westbank, an der Bir Zeit-Universität, ein Benefizkonzert zu geben. Ich stimme mit Daniel darin überein, dass Unwissenheit für kein Volk dieser Erde eine geeignete politische Strategie sein kann und jedes Volk auf seine Weise das verbotene „Andere“ kennen und verstehen lernen sollte.“ Zwar stehen diese Worte in einem Aufsatz über das in Israel vorherrschende Wagner-Tabu, doch passen sie wie angegossen auch zur Thematik des israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikts.
Es scheint mir, dass es ohnehin mehr die Künstler sind als die Denker oder Politiker, die dazu neigen, solche Verfestigungen aufzubrechen und nach Neuland zu suchen, natürlich vor allem auf dem Feld der Kultur. Und unter den Künstlern sind es wahrscheinlich die Dichter und die Musiker, die die größte Neigung dazu haben. Es ist kein Zufall, dass Daniel Barenboims musikalische Vermittlung zwischen jüdischer und muslimischer, israelischer und arabischer Kultur auf dem Felde der Orchestermusik unter dem Stichwort von Goethes „West-östlichem Diwan“ stattfindet, einem Werk, dessen vorauseilende Tiefendimension bis heute möglicherweise noch gar nicht verstanden worden ist. Ich meine jenseits der Formeln kultureller Indifferenz oder eines müden Relativismus. Goethes „Diwan“ hat insgesamt drei Dimensionen: Zunächst ist er Ausdruck einer Liebe, der des Dichters zu Marianne von Willemer. Des Weiteren ist er ein Werk der ausschweifenden und ausgreifenden Phantasie, des poetischen Eskapismus. „Flüchte du, im reinen Osten/Patriarchenluft zu kosten…“ Mit diesen berühmten Versen charakterisiert Goethe, der auch den Begriff „Weltliteratur“ prägte, seine Hegire, seine Hidschra oder Flucht aus dem engen alltäglichen Wirkungskreis Weimars in das Land der Weltkultur. Und drittens ist der „Diwan“ ein Werk der kulturellen Vermittlung und der Empathie gegenüber der morgenländischen, der islamischen Welt: „Orient und Okzident sind nicht mehr zu trennen“, schreibt Goethe und ist damit nicht nur seiner Zeit, sondern auch der unsrigen um Generationen voraus. Wir wissen alle, dass gerade *heute* diese Prophezeiung noch immer nicht wahr geworden ist, dass sich beide Welten in gewisser Weise sogar feindseliger gegenüberstehen als früher. Dass freilich Daniel Barenboim und Edward Said im Jahre 1999 gerade in Goethes Weimar, dem das Konzentrationslager Buchenwald benachbart ist, mit dem „Diwan-Orchester“ einen

ersten workshop abhalten konnten, berührt ebenso positiv wie die Enthüllung eines Denkmals in ebendiesem Weimar, das Goethe und seinen orientalischen Geistesverwandten, den persischen Dichter Hafis, vereint.
Nach dem Vorbild Goethes versucht Daniel Barenboim, durch das gemeinsame Musizieren wechselseitige Empathie zu schaffen, die allein irgendwann einmal Grundlage für eine funktionierende, wirklich tragende Friedensregelung zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern sein kann. Im Nachkriegseuropa ist das zwischen Nationen, die sich Jahrhunderte lang bekämpften und bekriegten, immerhin gelungen. Wer Empathie füreinander empfindet, wer sich auf der Ebene des Menschlichen im anderen wieder erkennt, kann sich auch manches Kritische sagen und sagen lassen. „Gerade der Freund darf bittere Wahrheiten sagen“, lautet ein türkisches Sprichwort.
Schon früh haben sich gerade westliche Musiker dem Orient zugewandt. Davon zeugen die Türkenopern des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts, deren bekannteste Mozarts „Die Entführung aus dem Serail“ ist; dazu Rossini, Peter Cornelius, Meyerbeer und viele andere. Beethoven schuf für seine „Ruinen von Athen“ eine Derwisch-Musik, so wie er sie sich vorstellte. Umgekehrt ist vielen von uns bis heute viel zu wenig bewusst, dass im arabischen Orient oder in der Türkei längst Konservatorien existieren, dass auch Orchester dort jene große symphonische Musik pflegen, die der aktuelle Literaturnobelpreisträger Orhan Pamuk aus Istanbul als eine der großen Errungenschaften der westlichen Kultur bezeichnet hat. Daran knüpft Barenboim an, ungeachtet der Widerstände und Einreden, die das hier und da mit sich bringt. Nicht jedem in Israel, um es zurückhaltend auszudrücken, hat es gefallen, dass das „Diwan-Orchester“ im Jahre 2005 in Ramallah, der provisorischen Hauptstadt der Palästinenser, musizierte, gewissermaßen in der Höhle des Löwen. Doch der Künstler, darauf hat Daniel Barenboim in seinen auch als Buch erschienenen Gesprächen mit Edward Said hingewiesen, hat das Privileg, radikal sein zu können, wo die Politiker ängstlich im Festgefügten und Festgelegten verharren. Der Friede kann weder dekretiert noch von einem auf den anderen Tag festgemacht werden; er ist ein mühsamer Prozess, wie auch die Musik Bewegung und Prozess ist, niemals Stillstand. So jedenfalls fasst der Dirigent und Pianist Daniel Barenboim jene Kunst auf, der er dient. Als Friedenskunst.
Arthur Schopenhauer, der selbst Flöte spielte, hat in der Musik die reinste aller Künste gesehen. In der Musik, so schrieb er, zeige sich das Wesen der Welt am unmittelbarsten, am wenigsten durch irgendeinen Stoff begrenzt und vermittelt. Daher rühre auch ihre Allgemeinverständlichkeit; wo immer Menschen zusammenkämen, um zu musizieren, spreche sie direkt ihr Inneres an. Wenn das so ist, wenn Schopenhauer mit dieser Definition recht hat, was liegt dann näher, als die Probe aufs Exempel zu machen, wie Daniel Barenboim das tut: das heißt die Sprache der Töne als die wirkliche und einzige Universalsprache der Menschheit einzusetzen? Gewiss: Es gibt sehr unterschiedliche Arten von Musik. Früher zog man in Europa mit klingendem Spiel in die Schlacht, man blies dem Feinde sozusagen den Marsch. Die osmanischen Janitscharen spielten vor der Schlacht eine Musik, die dem Feind, den Heeren der Christen, Furcht und Schrecken einjagen, sie selbst aber mutiger und wagemutiger machen sollte. Doch solche Musik wollen wir heute nicht mehr hören.
„Von Herzen, möge es wieder zu Herzen gehen“, schrieb Ludwig van Beethoven über seine Missa Solemnis. Beethoven ist ein Komponist, mit dem sich Daniel Barenboim besonders identifiziert. Ein Komponist, der in ganz besonderem Maße einem aufklärerischen Humanismus verpflichtet war, der auch viele Werke von Goethe und Schiller las und vielleicht wie kein zweiter die Möglichkeiten der Musik ausnutzte, zu transzendieren. Ein Dirigent und Pianist wie Daniel Barenboim kann der Arbeit an Beethovens Symphonien und Sonaten vieles abgewinnen, was auch – als grundsätzliche Haltung und Methode – für etwas so Schwieriges wie die Friedensstiftung von Nutzen sein kann. Niemals werde er glauben, dass die pure Notation der Fünften Symphonie schon die Symphonie selbst sei, hat er einmal gesagt. Erst wenn sie erklinge, werde sie Wirklichkeit und sei im eigentlichen Sinne existent. In der Form des Klanges wird sie dann zu einem Prozess.
Solches Denken kann man auf den Friedensprozess im Nahen Osten übertragen: Auch dafür genügt das Aufgeschriebene, sozusagen eine „Notation“ allein, so wichtig sie sein mag, nicht. Als sich ein Scheitern des Oslo-Prozesses abzuzeichnen begann, konnte man hören, diese Friedensvereinbarungen seien

eben nur Übereinkünfte von Politikern gewesen; es sei ein Politiker-Friede, keiner der Völker. Diese Beobachtung war zutiefst wahr. Zwar kann auch, wie die Friedensverträge Israels mit Ägypten und Jordanien zeigen, ein bloß abstrakter oder eisiger Friede einen gewissen Wert haben – als Abwesenheit von Krieg. Das ist schon etwas. Doch wissen alle, auf welch schwankendem Boden solche Abstraktionen stehen. Ohne Empathie und menschliches Interesse füreinander wird nicht nur zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern kein wirklicher Frieden entstehen, sondern erst recht keiner zwischen der „westlichen Welt“ und „dem Islam“, wie man so schön pauschal zu sagen pflegt.
Daniel Barenboims Engagement gründet auf der Sehnsucht nach Frieden, auf der Liebe zu seinem Land und auf der Überzeugung, dass Kultur, die diesen Namen verdient, niemals Nabelschau gewesen ist, sondern ein wechselseitiges Sich-Befruchten und Voneinander-Lernen. Das Westöstliche Diwan-Orchester steht dafür ebenso wie seine Bemühungen, die große Musiktradition auch bei Jugendlichen lebendig zu erhalten. Im maurischen Andalusien, wo einst der Islam herrschte, begegneten sich vor tausend Jahren westliche und östliche Musiktradition. Manches spricht dafür, dass die zur arabischen Laute vorgetragenen Muwashshaha-Liebesgedichte der arabischen Dichter in al-Andalus Pate standen bei der Entstehung der provencalischen Troubadour-Dichtung und -Musik. Diese beeinflusste ihrerseits den mittelalterlichen Minnesang. Daniel Barenboim kann mit seinem kulturübergreifenden Musizieren als ein zeitgenössischer Troubadour angesehen werden; als ein Troubadour der Hoffnung und des Friedens, nicht nur im Nahen Osten, sondern in der ganzen Welt.

[146] Alfred Grosser: Beleidigung des Humanismus. Falsche Wahl: Henryk M. Broder hat den Börne-Preis nicht verdient, in „taz“ 03.02.2007:
Dass der Börne-Preis in diesem Jahr von *Focus*-Herausgeber Helmut Markwort im Alleingang an Henryk M. Broder verliehen wurde, spricht dem Namensgeber dieser Auszeichnung doppelten Hohn. Denn Ludwig Börne war ein glühender Verfechter der Pressefreiheit und sprach und schrieb davon, dass alle Menschen gleich seien – und auch gleich in ihrem Leiden anzuerkennen seien.
Welches Verständnis der *Focus* von Pressefreiheit hat, durfte ich selbst einmal erleben: In einer Rezension, die von der Redaktion angefordert worden war, schrieb ich, dass ein Deutscher heute schnell Gefahr laufe, als Antisemit abgestempelt zu werden, wenn er auf das schlimme Los der Einwohner von Gaza, des Westjordanlands oder Ostjerusalems hinweist. Und ich lobte das Buch "Ich will nicht mehr schweigen. Über Recht und Gerechtigkeit in Palästina" von Rupert Neudeck, in dem dieser die israelische Besatzungspolitik kritisiert.
Wegen dieser Passage durfte die Rezension nicht erscheinen. Und Rupert Neudecks Buch konnte in Frankfurt nicht vorgestellt werden, weil die evangelische Kirche den dafür vorgesehenen Saal plötzlich nicht mehr zur Verfügung stellen wollte. Zuvor hatte der Frankfurter Historiker Arno Lustiger seine Freunde aufgerufen, die Veranstaltung, die israelische Fahne schwingend, zu stürmen und zu sprengen. Das mag nicht die gleiche Qualität haben wie die Absetzung der "Idomeneo"-Oper in Berlin. Aber es zeugt von der gleichen Verneinung eines freiheitlichen Geists.
Henryk M. Broder brandmarkt ständig alle und jeden, die sich um das Leiden der Anderen sorgen. Als Jude fühle ich mich verpflichtet, dieses Leid nicht zu ignorieren: So, wie ich mich nach 1945 verpflichtet fühlte, mich als jüdischer Franzose am Aufbau einer deutschen Demokratie zu beteiligen, damit das erlittene deutsche Leid der Bombennächte und der Vertreibungen nicht zu Selbstgerechtigkeit und zum Hass führen würde. Broder dagegen bekämpft, im Einklang mit fanatisch pro-israelischen Internetseiten wie „Honestly Concerned", so aggressiv wie möglich alle, die nicht so denken und handeln wie er.
In meinem Beitrag, der vom *Focus* zensiert wurde, ging ich noch einen Schritt weiter: Weil es in Deutschland und Frankreich auch mutige Hilfe für Juden gab, stellte ich die Frage, ob es für heutige Juden deshalb nicht eine Verpflichtung sei, „an das Schicksal von anderen Unterdrückten und Verachteten zu denken". Das heißt, sich als europäischer Jude auch für das Leid der Palästinenser empfänglich zu zeigen. Doch, wie es der israelische Schriftsteller David Grossman in seiner ergreifenden Grabrede für seinen im Libanon gefallenen Sohn Uri formuliert hat: „Es ist nicht cool, idealistisch zu sein. Oder ein Humanist. Oder wirklich sensibel zu

sein für die Not des anderen, auch wenn der andere ein Feind auf dem Schlachtfeld ist."
Helmut Markworts Entscheidung, Henryk M. Broder den Börne-Preis zu verleihen, missachtet diesen Humanismus. Er beleidigt damit jene Grundwerte, aufgrund derer Ludwig Börnes Name 1832 beim Hambacher Fest mit Begeisterung gefeiert wurde. Diese Werte bildeten die Basis der ersten deutschen Verfassung, die 1848 in der Frankfurter Paulskirche beschlossen wurde. Mit der diesjährigen Feier zur Verleihung des Börne-Preises in der Paulskirche wendet man sich von ihnen ab.

147 Tovah Lazaroff: Lieberman pushes Israel to join EU, in "Jerusalem Post"-online 31.01.2007:
Stumbling blocks to European Union membership such as the possibility that Israel might have to drop its Law of Return or the fact that Israel is physically located on the Asian continent have not deterred Israel Beiteinu ["Our House Israel"] head and Minister for Strategic Affairs Avigdor Lieberman from pushing to make what many would call a "pipe dream" into reality within the next five years.
While the Israeli has not formally asked for membership in the 27 member body of European states and the EU does not view it as a possibility at this time, Lieberman has still put it high on his agenda for security, economic and cultural reasons.
On Thursday, Lieberman is set to debate the matter with the European Union's Ambassador to Israel Ramiro Cibrian-Uzal on the Russian television station RTV1.
Lieberman's interest in the issue leaves EU officials in Brussels shaking their heads.
"Accession is not an option now," said Christian Leffler, the outgoing director of the Middle East and Southern Mediterranean Department for the European Commission in Brussels.
Joining the EU as a member state would likely mean that Israel would have to drop one of the key cornerstones of the its identity as a Jewish state, the Law of Return, which grants immediate citizenship to Jews only, said Leffler. As a result, he said, it is unlikely that Israel would even want to join the union.
"I'm not sure the Israeli government or Israeli public opinion would be ready to take on everything that membership means," Leffler told *The Jerusalem Post* during a recent visit to Israel.
To become a EU member, one has to balance a complex set of rights and obligations that reach quite far into society, said Leffler. Laws that would have to be changed or amended could include those that govern immigration, the free movement of people and services as well as civil liberties, he said.
Israel, for example, he said, would have to open its doors to workers from the EU who would want to come and live here, Leffler said.
There would also be some problematic military issues such as the policy of targeted assassinations, a tactic that Israel has used in Gaza and the Palestinian territories to eliminate terrorists, Leffler said.
Moreover, there is the basic physical reality that Israel is located on a different continent altogether, he noted.
"Geography is a challenge," said Leffler as he stated the obvious. "You are not in Europe."
It's true, he said, that the laws which govern admittance into the EU, including those that relate to citizenship and free movement of people, can be and have been challenged in court. But he warned it could be a long and cumbersome process.
To date, he said, no country has been accepted for membership that has been outside the continent. He added that it was his understanding that there were laws that restricted membership to countries geographically located within the European continent.
The EU, for example, rejected a membership bid by Morocco on the grounds that it was not a European country.
It's also unclear if the European Union wants to become larger at this time, said Leffler. The EU is still working to integrate the 10 new members who joined in 2004 and the additional ones that entered the union this month.
"It is creaking under the weight of its own success," said Leffler.
None of these facts have deterred Lieberman from his pursuit of the matter.
In spite of the high value that he has placed on Israel's identity as a Jewish state, he is not concerned by the potential conflict between EU membership and the Law

of Return. Nor is he stopped by the possibility that Israel would have to amend its laws to allow for an influx of Europeans including Muslim citizens of the continent to live and work here.
He and one of his advisers both told the *Post* they believed that Israel could hold on to the Law of Return and join the EU. His adviser said there were a number of EU countries with citizenship and immigration restrictions that were similar to those of Israel. Legal exceptions, he said, could be made which would allow Israel to hold on to the restrictions that it needs to maintain its character as a Jewish state.
Lieberman told the *Post* that he was drawn by the cultural and democratic link that exists between Israel and the EU, as well as the economic and security benefits that would be gained from such a union.
Given the strained and hostile relations Israel has with its neighbors, it would do better to position itself as a member of a group of nations with whom it more naturally belongs. That's particularly true in light of the terrorist threat that equally threatens both Israel and Europe, he said.
He also defended his position in a blog entry he wrote for the *Post* earlier this month.
"Today's world is dividing over values. On the one side is the free, democratic world, and on the other side is the radical, fundamentalist world.
"We might have disagreements with Europe and the international community over foreign policy, but we share the same values system that is the target of the radical, fundamentalist war against the West," Lieberman wrote.
Moreover, Israel is physically very close to Europe, said Lieberman. At its nearest point, "The EU is only half-an-hour away from Israel," Lieberman said.
Still, Israel's former ambassador to the European Union and academic expert on European affairs Avi Primor dismissed the notion with a laugh.
"It's ridiculous," Primor told the *Post*. Israel has not asked to be a member of the European Union. It would not want to be and the Union would not accept it as a candidate, Primor said.
The notion gets revived once in a while but only by Israeli politicians, "to make themselves sound interesting."
"We are not ready for it and we are not ripe for it," said Primor.
But the idea has the support of legal expert Amnon Rubinstein from the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya.
Rubinstein, like Lieberman, is a fan of Israel attaining EU membership. More to the point, he told the *Post*, it was possible from a legal perspective.
Israel may have to amend some aspects of its immigration policy, but it could hold on to the Law of Return, Rubinstein said.
The EU rule of equality on citizenship issues is not applied across the board to European countries. A number of these countries, such as Greece, Germany and Finland, have their own version of a law which prioritizes the return of ethnic groups from those countries.
More to the point, he said, the rule of equality doesn't apply to immigration and naturalization unless you discriminate against a certain group. It is acceptable to use special legislation to favor repatriation, Rubinstein said.
"I would like Israel to become part of the European family of nations," Rubinstein said.
It would give Israel added validity as a country if it joined the EU and it would make it harder for countries like Iran to threaten to attack it, said Rubinstein.
There are those in the EU who believe that culture and economics, rather than geography, should be a test for membership, said Rubinstein. From that perspective, Israel is a better fit than some of the new members, he said.
When he was in Israel at the Seventh Annual Herzliya conference earlier this month, former Spanish prime minister Jose Marie Aznar said, "Israel is located in the Middle East but it is not part of the Middle East, it is part of the West."
Tommy Steiner, the executive secretary of the Atlantic Forum, an advocacy group that pushes for closer ties between Israel and Europe and NATO, however, said that even though Israel was a good candidate for membership it didn't mean that it should pursue that course.
In the short term, it's not feasible, he said. One needs only to look at Turkey, which first applied for membership 20 years ago, but has yet to succeed in that endeavor, Steiner added.

Israel would do better to strengthen and expand its already existing ties without actually joining the EU, Steiner said. He noted, for example, that Norway and Switzerland have close ties with the EU but are not member states.
"I think that there is potential for a considerable upgrade of relations," he said.
There would be a potential monetary price, said Steiner, who added that Israel today is the only country in the world that has free trade agreements with both the US and Europe. But if Israel joined the EU it could jeopardize its free trade agreement with the United States, he said.
Leffler agreed.
"Gaining acceptance is always far more difficult" than using already existing institutions, said Leffler.
He said that there were a number of avenues that Israel already uses to strengthen ties with Europe such as the Association Agreement which was fully put in place in 2000, and which allows for free trade between Israel and the EU. In 2006, for example, Israel exported $10 billion worth of goods and imported $14 billion from the EU.
In addition, there is an Action Plan of 2005 that exists under the European Neighborhood Policy that helps implement and augment the Association Agreement.
The Action Plan of the ENP offers economic, cultural and governmental cooperation across a broad range of issues including terrorism, the environment, education, trade, health, culture, economics, and even allows for Israel and the EU to work on joint strategies to combat anti-Semitism.
That Action Plan, is "the best vehicle you have now" to move closer to the EU, Leffler said. Similar plans exist with 17 other countries that border Europe, but "There is no other country in this region that is better able to take advantage of the ENP than Israel," said Leffler.
Many of the ENP countries still have to develop market economies and build democratic structures before they can take full advantage of the program, Leffler said.
Israel, in contrast, already has the elements it needs to fully utilize the program, he said. In that sense, Israel is already an equal partner with Europe, Leffler added. "You have relations with us that are of the same kind that Switzerland, Norway and Iceland have."

[148] Joel Greenberg: Barrier reshapes face of Jerusalem, in “Chicago Tribune2 31.01.2007:
Jerusalem – On a hill on Jerusalem's eastern outskirts, the suburb of a-Zaim in the West Bank is emptying out. Left outside a barrier Israel is building around Jerusalem, residents are abandoning their homes and moving to Arab neighborhoods inside the city limits.
The complex of walls and fences ringing Jerusalem, planned to extend 90 miles, is part of a larger Israeli separation barrier in the West Bank that is meant to block attacks by Palestinian suicide bombers. But the Jerusalem barrier cuts through Arab neighborhoods, creating a vast dislocation in the lives of thousands of Palestinians.
With more than half the barrier complete, it has already caused shifts in Jerusalem's population and dealt a heavy blow to the economy in the city's Arab sector.
The barrier's contribution to security is a matter of debate: While there has been a sharp drop in attacks in Jerusalem, the calm has coincided with a decision by Hamas to suspend suicide bombings in Israel as part of a shaky cease-fire. A bomber who struck the southern resort city of Eilat on Monday, killing three Israelis, was dispatched by Islamic Jihad, which has rejected the truce.
In the meantime, the barrier has led to a steady Arab migration into Jerusalem, where about a third of the 724,000 residents are Arab, according to official statistics. Exactly how many Arabs have moved into the city since the barrier was erected is not known, but the number is estimated in the thousands.
Israel Kimhi, a former municipal planner, said that the movement of Palestinians into Jerusalem is an unintended consequence of the barrier, countering longstanding Israeli efforts to maintain a large Jewish majority in the city.
`More Arabs in Jerusalem'

"We've ended up with more Arabs in Jerusalem, which contradicts the policies of all Israeli governments who have wanted to see Jerusalem as a Jewish capital city," said Kimhi, now a senior researcher at the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies.
A report by the institute said that the barrier was also turning Jerusalem from a metropolis into a "dead-end city," cut off from the West Bank hinterland it normally serves.
The barrier went up after Palestinian suicide bombers and other attackers killed nearly 200 people in Jerusalem's Jewish neighborhoods in the first four years of a Palestinian uprising that began in 2000.
"The barrier is meant to protect Jerusalem residents from murderous terrorism," said Netzah Mashiach, who manages the project for the Israeli Defense Ministry. "The main consideration is security, while minimizing the disruption of Palestinian daily life."
The barrier route generally follows the expanded city limits set by the Israelis after they captured East Jerusalem in the 1967 Middle East war but it excludes some Arab neighborhoods while taking in some Jewish settlements in the West Bank. A planned extension eastward is supposed to wrap around Maale Adumim, the largest Israeli settlement, driving a wedge between the northern and southern West Bank.
The fences and 25-foot-high concrete walls have damaged the urban fabric of Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods and suburbs.
A wall down the middle of what was once the main road from Jerusalem to the northern West Bank has had a devastating effect on the area's businesses. Dwindling traffic has caused many shops to close, and the formerly bustling commercial strip is largely empty.
Long Delays
Tens of thousands of Jerusalem Arabs who have moved over the years to West Bank suburbs find themselves cut off from the city, and many have to take circuitous routes or pass through security terminals with lines, ID checks and metal detectors to reach jobs, schools and hospitals. The crossing can take anywhere from several minutes to well over an hour.
The hardships caused Musa, who identified himself only by his first name, to move his family back to East Jerusalem a few months ago from a-Zaim, just across a valley in the West Bank.
Once a neighborhood of 4,000 people, a-Zaim has now lost nearly half its residents, according to the mayor, Mahmoud Sbeih. Many apartments are empty. Travel out of the village requires passage through a checkpoint controlling entry into Jerusalem, and when checks are tightened there can be long traffic backups, residents said.
Musa said that he and his brother moved their families out of spacious homes in a-Zaim and now share a cramped apartment in the crowded neighborhood of a-Tur on the biblical Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem. The area is packed with new arrivals from the West Bank suburbs, and rental rates have soared.
The barrier has severely hurt businesses in Arab parts of Jerusalem because many shoppers from neighboring West Bank areas, once the lifeblood of the East Jerusalem economy, no longer arrive. At the same time, fewer Jerusalem Arabs cross the barrier to shop in adjacent communities in the West Bank.
In the West Bank suburb of a-Ram, which has been severed from Jerusalem by a wall, Ata Ouri, who sells masonry for construction, bemoaned the loss of customers since the barrier went up. His sales in 2006 were less than half of what they were the previous year, and business is still dropping because it is increasingly difficult for customers to reach the area, he said.
"This is a punishment," he said, referring to the wall outside his store, which cuts across what was the main road north from Jerusalem. "It is breaking the economy and will only increase hatred."
Waning Business
Surveying shuttered shops along the street, Ouri said that he, too, is considering closing down and moving his business elsewhere.
To soften the impact of the barrier on Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem that remain outside the wall, Israeli authorities are planning to open a service center at a security terminal north of the city with branches of government departments, such

as national insurance, the Interior Ministry, the motor licensing bureau and a post office.
About 3,700 schoolchildren from neighborhoods outside the barrier are bused daily into the city by the municipality, said Ziv Ayalon, a city official involved in the arrangements. He said efforts are also being made to deliver municipal services, such as baby-care clinics and after-school programs, to the affected communities.
Mashiach, the project manager, said that the barrier has 13 passages enabling Jerusalem residents and other Palestinians with permits to reach the city. "We are investing a great deal to provide solutions," he said. "It is the terror that created these hardships."
Security Measure?
While Mashiach and other Israeli officials maintain that the barrier is strictly a security measure, Palestinians and other critics call the project an attempt to cut East Jerusalem off from the West Bank and consolidate Israeli control over the city.
Palestinians want East Jerusalem to become the capital of a future Palestinian state, while Israel has annexed the area, declaring it part of its united capital.
Menachem Klein, an Israeli expert on Jerusalem at Bar-Ilan University who has participated in informal negotiations on the future of the city, argues that although the barrier was a response to security concerns, it has been built in a way that serves political aims.
"The goal is to destroy East Jerusalem as the metropolis of the West Bank and impose Israeli rule," he said.
Klein said the sharp drop in Palestinian attacks in Jerusalem should be attributed less to the barrier, which is still unfinished, than to the decision by Hamas and other militant groups to halt suicide bombings inside Israel as part of a cease-fire that was first reached in 2005.
"What is stopping terror is the decision of the organizations, not the wall," Klein said.

[149] Yossi Alpher: Israel Never Liked Bush's Democratizing Scheme, in "Daily Star" 31.1.2007: Israel and the United States have a close and vital strategic relationship that constitutes a pillar of Israel's security. Israeli leaders are aware that any major new regional policy departure not closely coordinated with Washington is liable to be a non-starter and to cloud American-Israeli relations. Any smart Israeli aspiring to political leadership knows that the Israeli public wants to be reassured that he or she is persona grata in the White House, the Congress and among the American Jewish community.
Yet there was a time when Israeli leaders were not afraid to disagree publicly with American leaders and even act against an American policy line if they judged that Israel's vital interests warranted such a step. Yitzhak Rabin did so in his first term when he took issue with Henry Kissinger's "reassessment." So, too, did Menachem Begin, declaring that "we're not a banana republic." Yitzhak Shamir and Benjamin Netanyahu also clashed publicly with American presidents over settlements and the Palestinian issue.
Dissenting from American policy priorities for the Middle East has not always been politically sound for Israeli leaders. Sometimes, however, it has been, and instructively so. Begin and Moshe Dayan's secret initiative to bring Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem, and Rabin and Shimon Peres' clandestine talks in Oslo with the Palestine Liberation Organization, were embraced by Washington once it became aware that Israel had successfully implemented a radically different strategy.
But rightly or wrongly, when Israel takes its distance from American policies, this at least reflects a capacity on the part of the Israeli national security leadership to independently assess and act upon the country's vital strategic interests. This capacity seems dangerously absent of late.
An obvious case in point is Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's recent assertion that Israel can't talk to Syria because doing so would betray President George W. Bush's policy line. It doesn't matter that the Democratic majority in Congress might lean toward a dialogue with Syria, or that the Iraq Study Group report recommended such a step, or that the beleaguered Bush is a lame duck with whom Israel can risk disagreeing.

Nor does Olmert appear to be influenced by the advocacy of negotiations with Syria by many in the Israeli security establishment. That he actually invoked Bush as his rationale for ignoring Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad's offer to reopen peace negotiations portrays the Israeli prime minister as an amateur on strategic issues. Olmert's predecessor, by contrast, was anything but an amateur in Israeli-American relations, and more broadly in dealing with America's policies in the region. When it came to Bush's decision to go to war in Iraq and to democratize the Arab Middle East from within, Ariel Sharon took a far more sophisticated position. Publicly, Sharon played the silent ally; he neither criticized nor supported the Iraq adventure. One reason for his relative silence was Washington's explicit request that Israel refrain from openly backing its invasion of an Arab country or in any way intervening, lest its blessing damn the United States in Arab eyes.

But sometime prior to March 2003, Sharon told Bush privately in no uncertain terms what he thought about the Iraq plan. Sharon's words – revealed here for the first time – constituted a friendly but pointed warning to Bush. Sharon acknowledged that Saddam Hussein was an "acute threat" to the Middle East and that he believed Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction. Yet according to one knowledgeable source, Sharon nevertheless advised Bush not to occupy Iraq. According to another source – Danny Ayalon, who was Israel's ambassador to the US at the time of the Iraq invasion, and who sat in on the Bush-Sharon meetings – Sharon told Bush that Israel would not "push one way or another" regarding the Iraq scheme.

According to both sources, Sharon warned Bush that if he insisted on occupying Iraq, he should at least abandon his plan to implant democracy in this part of the world. "In terms of culture and tradition, the Arab world is not built for democratization," Ayalon recalls Sharon advising.

Be sure, Sharon added, not to go into Iraq without a viable exit strategy; and ready a counter-insurgency strategy if you expect to rule Iraq, which will eventually have to be partitioned into its component parts. Finally, Sharon told Bush, please remember that you will conquer, occupy and leave, but we have to remain in this part of the world. Israel, he reminded the US president, does not wish to see its vital interests hurt by regional radicalization and the spillover of violence beyond Iraq's borders.

Sharon's advice was prescient. The US occupation of Iraq has ended up strengthening Iran, Israel's number-one enemy, and enfranchising militant Shiite Islamists. A large part of Iraq is slipping into the Iranian orbit. Iraq's western Anbar Province is increasingly dominated by militant jihadist Sunnis who could eventually threaten Syria and Jordan, the latter a strategic partner and geographic buffer for Israel.

All these developments harm vital Israeli interests. This past summer, Israel fought a war against two militant Islamist movements supported by Iran – Hizbullah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza – that were enfranchised and legitimized in their countries thanks to Bush's insistence on hasty and ill-advised democratic elections "in this part of the world."

Had Sharon made his criticism public, citing the dangers posed to Israeli interests, might he have made a difference in the pre-war debate in the US and the world? Certainly he would have poured cold water on the postwar assertions of critics, like Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, who have fingered Israel, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and pro-Israelis in the administration for instigating the war. Ayalon, incidentally, was directed by Sharon to warn all Israelis visiting Washington not to encourage the US scheme for war in Iraq, lest Israel be blamed for its failure.

There were, of course, neoconservative types in Israel who did encourage the US to occupy Iraq and advocated democratic elections wherever possible in the Middle East. But there were also many Israelis, including me, who spoke out openly and publicly against the American scheme.

Even AIPAC officials in Washington told visiting Arab intellectuals they would rather the US deal militarily with Iran than with Iraq. And pro-Western Arab leaders like Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and Jordan's King Abdullah were outspoken in their criticism of Bush's war plans, even though they could fall back on far less credit and lobbying support in Washington than in Israel.

As a faithful ally of the US, Israel is morally obligated to tell Washington when its policies are not only mistaken but also harmful. Many American Middle East policy initiatives since 2003 have indeed been detrimental to Israeli interests. When Bush ignored his advice about Iraq, Sharon should have found a respectful and friendly way to make his reservations public.
It's not too late for Olmert to put Israel's case to Bush – first discreetly, then, if necessary, publicly. He should start with the issue of negotiating with Syria and the harm that Israel will suffer from the emergence of militant Sunni and Shiite Islamist states in Iraq following an American withdrawal, unless Washington takes urgent and radical steps to install a tough and friendly regime in Baghdad. *Yossi Alpher, a former adviser to former Prime Minister Ehud Barak and former director of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, is co-editor of the bitterlemons family of online publications. The Daily Star publishes this commentary in collaboration with the Common Ground News Service.*

[150] The International Crisis Group: Egypt's Sinai Question, Middle East/North Africa Report No 61, 30 January 200, EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:
Terrorism returned to Egypt in 2004 after an absence of seven years with successive attacks and the emergence of a heretofore unknown movement in Sinai. The government's reaction essentially has been confined to the security sphere: tracking down and eliminating the terrorists. Egyptian and international NGOs have focused on the human rights violations which have been prominent in police procedures. The media have been preoccupied with whether al-Qaeda was responsible. Both the state's response and wider public discussion have been confined to the surface of events and have ignored the socio-economic, cultural and political problems which are at the heart of Sinai's disquiet. The emergence of a terrorist movement where none previously existed is symptomatic of major tensions and conflicts in Sinai and, above all, of its problematic relationship to the Egyptian nation-state. Unless these factors are addressed effectively, there is no reason to assume the terrorist movement can be eliminated.
Sinai has long been, at best, a semi-detached region, its Egyptian identity far from wholly assured. Under Israeli occupation from 1967 to 1982, it has remained under a special security regime mandated by the 1979 peace treaty, which significantly qualifies Egypt's freedom of military action. Its geo-political situation – it comprises the whole of Egypt's frontier with Israel and with the Palestinian enclave of Gaza – makes it of enormous strategic significance to both Egypt and Israel and sensitive to developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
The population of approximately 360,000 – some 300,000 in the north, 60,000 in the south – is different from the rest of the country. A substantial minority is of Palestinian extraction, even if often Egyptian-born; the rest, labelled "Bedouin", are longstanding natives of the peninsula. The Palestinian element is extremely conscious of its identity and ties to the populations of Gaza and the West Bank. The Bedouin (only a small minority are still tent-dwelling nomads) also possess a distinct identity. Very aware of their historic origins in Arabia and belonging to tribes which often have extensive branches in Israel, Palestine and Jordan, they, like the Palestinians, are naturally oriented eastward rather than toward the rest of Egypt. Neither Palestinians nor Bedouins have any share or interest in the Pharaonic heritage common to the populations (Muslim and Christian) of the Nile Valley. These identity differences have been aggravated by socio-economic development promoted by the authorities since 1982. The government has not sought to integrate Sinai's populations into the nation through a far-sighted program responding to their needs and mobilising their active involvement. Instead, it has promoted the settlement of Nile Valley migrants, whom it has systematically favoured, while discriminating against the local populations in jobs and housing in the north and in the rapid development of tourist enclaves (for Egyptians as well as internationals) in the south. These developments have offered scant opportunities to locals and often have been at their expense (notably with regard to land rights), provoking deep resentment. The government has done little or nothing to encourage participation of Sinai residents in national political life, used divide and rule tactics in orchestrating the meagre local representation allowed, and promoted the Pharaonic heritage at the expense of Sinai's Bedouin traditions.

Thus, beneath the terrorism problem is a more serious and enduring "Sinai question" which the political class has yet to address. Doing so will not be easy. Since this question is partly rooted in wider Middle East crises, above all the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a definitive solution depends on their resolution. But the solution also requires the full integration and participation of Sinai's populations in national political life, which means it is also dependent on significant political reforms in the country as a whole, which are not at present on the horizon. While a comprehensive solution of the Sinai question cannot be expected soon, the government can and should alter a development strategy that is deeply discriminatory and largely ineffective at meeting local needs. A new, properly funded plan, produced in consultation with credible local representatives and involving all elements of the population in implementation, could transform attitudes to the state by addressing Sinai's grievances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Egyptian Government:

1. Prepare, in consultation with community leaders, the private sector and donors, a comprehensive social and economic development plan for Sinai which:
(a) deals with the region as a whole;
(b) takes account of the socio-economic interdependence of the north and south; and
(c) eliminates all criteria and procedures that discriminate against the local population.
2. Promote the participation of local communities and their genuine political representatives in development decision-making for Sinai.
3. Facilitate and encourage the building of local capacities (e.g. local associations) by simplifying political and administrative rules and targeting government grants and loans to equip such associations.
4. Provide Bedouin communities with the tools to formulate and implement local development projects, notably by organising training courses.
5. Acknowledge Sinai's distinct cultural and linguistic traditions as part of Egypt's national heritage and fund projects that preserve them.

To the Egyptian Political Parties:

6. Establish or, where already present, develop and extend a presence in the region by recruiting members from the local populations and providing orderly channels for expression of their particular needs and grievances.

To Egypt's International Partners:

7. Recognise the danger that the Sinai question, if untreated, may pose to Egypt's stability in the medium term and encourage and assist the authorities in the conception, financing and implementation of a new special development plan for the region.

Cairo/Brussels, 30 January 2007

[151] Nathan Guttman: Baker Group Advisor ‚Surprised', ‚Upset' at Report's Israel-Iraq Link, in „Forward" 30.1.2007:

Washington – Several advisers to the bipartisan Iraq Study Group were surprised and upset by the decision of panel leaders to argue that American success in Iraq depends in part on progress in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Forward has learned.

Issued eight weeks ago, the Iraq Study Group's final report asserted that "the United States will not be able to achieve its goals in the Middle East unless the United States deals directly with the Arab-Israeli conflict." The two co-chairmen of the panel – James Baker, who served as secretary of state under the first President Bush, and Lee Hamilton, a former Democratic congressman from Indiana and vice-chairman of the 9/11 Commission – have since advanced the argument in media interviews. Supporters of an increased American role in kick-starting the peace process have hailed the final report, while some pro-Israel activists and Jewish groups have worried that it could lead to pressure on Jerusalem.

Baker and Hamilton appeared Tuesday before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as part of the ongoing discussion in the committee on ways to solve the Iraq situation. The committee's Democratic chair, Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware, has already stated that he rejects the linkage the study group made between Israel and Iraq. "Even if a peace treaty were signed tomorrow, it would not end the civil war in Iraq," Biden said during a January 17 hearing.

In interviews with the Forward, several of the experts who advised the panel said they were shocked that the Israeli-Palestinian issue was included in the final report, since they had been told not to address the matter in their recommendations. "They kept on telling us it is a sensitive issue and that it has too many political implications," one of the experts said.
The objections went beyond process, with some advisers arguing to the Forward that progress in Israeli-Palestinian talks is desirable but would have little impact on the situation in Iraq. "Desirable as it may be, we cannot obtain progress in the Israeli-Palestinian front right now, and even if we could, it would take years and the impact on Iraq would be less significant than some think," said Wayne White, a former State Department official and one of the expert advisers.
The study group's expert advisers were divided among four different working groups based on their areas of expertise and offered up recommendations to the panel. The panel's professional staffers then took these suggestions and used them to produce the final report that was eventually approved by Baker, Hamilton and the other eight members of the Iraq Study Group.
According to several advisers, the staffers who wrote the chapter in question were Edward Djerejian, a former ambassador to Syria and Israel with close ties to Baker, and Christopher Kojm, a former aide to Hamilton who held senior positions in the State Department and the 9/11 Commission.
One staff member argued that insisting on making a clear linkage between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the situation in Iraq was "stupid" and "exposed the report to criticism." That staff member pointed to Djerejian as the person who inserted the language regarding Israel.
Through a spokesman, Djerejian declined to comment on this issue. At the Senate committee hearing this past Tuesday, Baker defended the decision to link progress in the Israeli-Arab conflict and progress in Iraq.
The former secretary of state said: "Some have asked us: What does the Arab-Israeli conflict have to do with the war in Iraq? Why make one problem harder by taking on two? The answer is simple. It is difficult to establish regional stability in the Middle East without addressing the Arab-Israeli issue. We want other countries, especially the Sunni Arab countries, to help us. When we go to talk to them about Iraq, they will want to talk about the Arab-Israeli conflict."
Baker commended Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on her efforts to renew peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians, but said that he and Hamilton "feel particularly strong" that the United States is missing an opportunity by refusing to talk with Syria. Later in the hearing, Baker said that an American dialogue with the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad could lead Damascus to stop supporting Hezbollah militants in Lebanon and to pressure Hamas to recognize Israel, thus leading the way to a possible peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.
One adviser, James Dobbins of the Rand Corporation, disputed the notion that the views on the Israeli-Palestinian issue in the final report reflects only Djerejian's beliefs. "It is consistent with what most of the members thought," Dobbins said. "No Middle East expert thinks that solving the conflict will bring an end to all of the region's problems, but it surely can help."
Members of the so-called strategic environment working group – the one that would in theory have offered recommendations on Palestinian talks – told the Forward that their discussions on the issue were not reflected in the final report.
The professional staff of the United States Institute of Peace – the federally funded think tank under whose auspices the Iraq Study Group operated – was also surprised to see the final language of the report when it was presented by Baker and Hamilton. "We saw it for the first time when it was published, and we were as surprised as anyone else," said one staff member, speaking on condition of anonymity.
According to the staff member, the working group on strategic environment was never asked by the 10 members of the bipartisan panel to deal with the role that the United States should play in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and received no guidance on this issue. Two members of the working group confirmed this account of events. By June, most of the work in the expert groups was completed, but the 10 panel members decided not to finish the report before November's mid-term elections, in order to remain above the political fray. So, at the start of the summer,

the structure of the four separate working groups became more flexible and the experts from each group were also asked to participate in discussions relating to other groups.
As an intellectual exercise, members of the group dealing with Iraq's strategic environment were asked to compose a "wish list" that would detail all the changes they would like to see in the region, regardless of their feasibility or political implications. It was as part of this exercise that the need to resolve the Israeli-Arab conflict based on United Nations resolutions 242 and 338 was mentioned.
Many staff members found the language of the final report disturbing, especially in the direct linkage it made between resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict and reaching stability in Iraq.
"Some of us were frustrated from the way it was all inserted in the last minute and from the language they chose," said one of the professional staff members. "The report came out dealing with the Arab-Israeli issue in an unsophisticated way."
Another staff member said that most of the advisers believed that it was senseless to assert a direct linkage between the Israeli-Arab conflict and Iraq. The staffer told of a joke that one of the advisers made when the issue came up: "Does anyone think that if we solve the [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict the insurgent in Fallujah will say, 'Great, now I can put back my AK-47 and go home.'"
Israeli officials were low key in their response to the Iraq Study Group report, though Prime Minister Ehud Olmert did make clear that he does not believe the Bush administration sees a linkage between the situations in Israel and Iraq.
Members of the Iraq Study Group staff also criticized the fact that Israeli officials were not consulted, while almost all Arab ambassadors in the United States were interviewed by the panel. Once Israeli officials learned of the work being done by the study group regarding Israel, they contacted the United States Institute of Peace and were told that one Israeli had been interviewed – the Labor Party's Ephraim Sneh, who at the time was a member of Knesset (he is now deputy minister of defense).
In sharp contrast to the dissension on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the committee's professional staff and expert advisers all agreed on the need for the United States to engage with Syria and Iran. They are very frustrated by the administration's rejection of their recommendations on this issue.
"The issue of Iran was much more important for the future of Iraq than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the reaction of the president to our recommendations regarding Iran is much more significant," White said. "It became clear from the beginning that the president is not interested in any aspect of the diplomatic chapter in the report."
Dobbins offered two theories to explain Bush's refusal to engage with Tehran – according to one, the president is using Iran to divert public attention from Iraq and to have a scapegoat for the ongoing American failures there; the other is that Bush will eventually talk to Iran, but he is toughening his stand now in order to come to the talks from a better bargaining position.
Paul Stares, who served as the secretariat of the strategic environment group in the Baker-Hamilton panel, said he believes that Congress and public opinion can still make the report relevant. "There are many in Congress who believe that the group did a good job and will continue pointing to the report as a road map for the U.S. policy toward Iraq," Stares said. But, he added, the report will not remain relevant forever. "At some point, the conditions on the ground will change and the report will be OBE [overcome by events], but we're not close to that yet."

[152] Vgl. Reiner Bernstein: Von Gaza nach Genf. Die Genfer Friedensinitiative von Israelis und Palästinensern. Schwalbach/Ts. 2006, S. 30 f.

[153] Forum of the Peace Initiative with Syria: Wording of the declaration: We, the undersigned, represent a wide spectrum of opinions and political attitudes. We believe that the time has come to respond seriously to the signs that are coming from Syria. Since the day the State of Israel was founded, we have regarded Syria as the most stubborn and determined enemy endangering our existence. And now, after bitter wars and conflicts between us, there are hints coming from Syria that show a desire to open a new page, a page of reconciliation for political settlement.

Prior to signing the peace treaty with Egypt, many firm opponents stood up to claim the development as impossible . But peace with the largest Arab state has lasted, despite the great tribulations that befell the region.
We believe that ignoring the conciliatory initiative with Syria would be an irresponsible gamble with the future of the State of Israel. Out of concern for our existence, and out of concern for the next generation and the generations after that, we must re-examine our attitude of regarding the border with Syria as one of eternal enmity and war. We gave up Sinai and in return we gained peace with Egypt. We call upon the government of Israel, upon those amongst us who are responsible for designing policy, to listen to the voices that are making themselves heard from Damascus. Peace with Syria means peace with the region in which we live. The price of peace is much cheaper than the bitter and destructive price of war.
We call upon the public to join its voice to ours. We must all take the patriotic step of trying to dismantle the obstacles of hatred, enmity and war that have been sown between us and Syria.

[154] IMRA: Why not strengthen Peace Now or The Council For Peace And Security instead of forming a new group?
Sasson: No. No. This doesn't have anything to do with Peace Now or The Council For Peace And Security. We established this forum because we believe that it is necessary to pressure the Government of Israel and in particular the prime minister to engage in negotiations with Syria.
IMRA: This is an international group?
Sasson: Right now it is Israeli. I am flying to London now and may establish a core group and perhaps later a forum there between Israel and Syria.
IMRA: You see having broad activity with advertising in the newspapers anddirect mail etc.
Sasson: Yes yes. It must be done and I know from American and British sources close to me that are in touch with the Syrian foreign minister that they are interested in making peace. A stable peace. The Golan Heights can be developed for tourism.
IMRA: So you are talking about a campaign with a serious budget.
Sasson: Yes. It is a very serious matter. Before Sadat came that was also ridiculed and today the matter of Syria is being ridiculed. I once said "if we don't believe the Arabs there will never be peace".
IMRA: How large a budget is required for such a serious campaign?
Sasson: In truth we don't yet have a budget. We are doing it from our own money. And we already need help.
IMRA: You foresee a situation in which the same foreign elements that contributed to the activities of Peace Now and The Council for Peace and Security might also be a source for this serious campaign?
Sasson: I don't know. I haven't contacted any group to raise funds but believe in what I am doing. If there is peace between Israel ad Syria it would also be good for the Americans.
IMRA: Of course there is the question as to what one will ultimately have if one signs an agreement with someone from a regime that represents less than ten percent of the population of a country before it has another revolution. But I am not coming here to debate with you. You know better than I that the regime now controlling Syria is a minority regime and there is no way to know what tomorrow may bring.
Sasson: We didn't concern ourselves with that when we made peace with Egypt.
IMRA: Of course. I didn't come here to argue. For that matter no one knows what will be with Egypt.
Sasson: You know, my friends who drank in coffee houses and ate at restaurants in Damascus found that eighty percent of the people they sat with are interested in peace.
IMRA: Do you foresee the same model with regard to Syria that there was with Egypt?
Sasson: It will be better.
IMRA: In terms of the amassing of arms afterwards.
Sasson: What arming?

IMRA: Well, as a result of the peace between Israel and Egypt the Egyptians went from being armed with old weapons from the then Soviet Union to a situation in which they have the most advance American weapons. So I ask if the same thing will happen with the Syrians.
Sasson: The peace, if it happens, will strengthen all the moderate Arab tates.
IMRA: That's not my question. I am asking you a concrete question: to the extent that there will be peace…
Sasson: Arming is not something we think about. Why? Because if there will be peace there will be less arming.
IMRA: Well, there is peace with Egypt and they decided to direct the overwhelming majority of the billions of dollars of American aid that they received towards buying top of the line weapons.
Sasson: That's a matter between America and Egypt.
IMRA: So you see the same situation developing between America and the Syrians?
Sasson: It could be also. The agreement would bring them closer [to] the West – to the U.S.
IMRA: I am talking about arming. Right now the Egyptians have a much stronger navy than the Israeli navy thanks to the peace. Could the same thing happen with the Syrians?
Sasson: You can't tell them not to arm because others are arming. This is not the matter. The important thing for us is the matter of peace and if there is peace there won't be a need for massive arming. The biggest danger is the conflict between us and this leads to the arming on both sides.
IMRA: That's to say that you don't rule out the possibility that on the one hand we might have some international park on the Golan Heights while on the other hand the Syrians will have billions of dollars of American made weapons.
Sasson: That isn't the most important point. Today war isn't as it was thirty of forty years ago. There is a change. The conflict between us and the Arabs before was political. Now it is a religious dispute and this is the greatest danger.
IMRA: So you are saying that balance of power and military capabilities are no longer considerations in the initiation of war.
Sasson: Developments in recent years because we denigrated the Arabs led to the situation that they turned to religion. That's why Hamas strengthened.
IMRA: You raise an interesting question because there will always be radical Islamic groups that will take the position that even if we sign a peace agreement with our neighbors that they still won't accept us.
Sasson: The moment we sign a peace agreement all these groups will weaken.
IMRA: You don't think that poverty also causes them to strengthen.
Sasson: Poverty doesn't lead to such a situation.
IMRA: Is it possible that matters not connected to Israel and its relations with its neighbors may lead to a strengthening of radical Islam?
Sasson: No.
IMRA: Things having nothing to do with Israel.
Sasson: No. No. This is an internal matter for them. The Arab states fear war. Why? Because if there is war then radical Islam will [become stronger] in their states.
IMRA: My question is a bit different Mr. Sasson. As someone who has a personal familiarity with the Middle East over the years, do you rule out the possibility that something that has nothing to do with Arab-Israeli relations could cause a rise to power of radical Islamic elements in the states in our neighborhood?
Sasson: If the situation continues.
IMRA: No. I am asking beyond Arab-Israeli relations: Is it possible that other matters not associated with Arab Israeli relation could bring to power radical Islamic elements?
Sasson: I am saying that radical Islam exploits the Arab-Israeli conflict
IMRA: You are saying that there is nothing other than the Arab-Israeli conflict that can bring radical Islam to power? Only that?
Sasson: Only that.
IMRA: Only that?
Sasson: Only that.

IMRA: That is the absolute only thing in our region that can bring radical Islam to power?
Sasson: Yes.
IMRA: So that's to say that every place in the Middle East that radical Islam came to power it was because of Israel?
Sasson: It was one of the reasons.
IMRA: One of the reasons. So there were also other reasons.
Sasson: But the main reason was the Arab Israel conflict.
IMRA: Mubarak said that corruption is the primary reason that radical Islam can come to power. Corruption.
Sasson: Today there is corruption also in the West. Also in America. IMRA: So people have gotten to be so accustomed to corruption that it won't bring radical Islam to power.
Sasson: The moment that there is peace the standard of living will start to recover and this will help the poor.
IMRA: You are a businessman. As one you are aware of factors that can affect a market that have nothing to do with you. For example, if the price of oil drops to $25 a barrel something like that couldn't lead to a situation of upheaval in the region that has nothing to do with Israel?
Sasson: Ten years ago oil dropped below $15 a barrel and today it went up and we see that that isn't the reason. The reason for trouble is the Arab Israeli conflict.
IMRA: That's to say that it isn't poverty, it isn't corruption. The only thing is what happens between the Arabs and Israel.
Sasson: There are of course other things such as poverty etc. But radical Islam, be it in Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Jordan – all point to the Arab Israeli conflict. Even Bin Laden.
IMRA: There is a line of thought that says that when leaders face domestic upheaval that they turn to external conflicts to divert the public's focus from internal problems. They seek external conflict to stay in power. That they go to war not because of the claim they have against their enemy but instead the need to turn the opposition of their public away from them towards an external enemy.
Sasson: There are many reasons for war. Economic ones.
IMRA: Not economics. You are in power and you don't want to be put out of power.
Sasson: But religious ones – they are the worse ones.
IMRA: And those who see all of Palestine as waqf, such that there is no place for a Jewish State.
Sasson: Look. All the Arab states back the Saudi initiative of land for peace. Peace brings security. No matter how strong we are and how strong America is it won't help. Security doesn't bring peace. Only peace brings security.

[155] James Glanz: Iranian reveals plan to expand role in Iraq, in “International Herald Tribune” 28.01.2007:
BAGHDAD: The Iranian ambassador to Baghdad has outlined an ambitious plan to greatly expand economic and military ties with Iraq, including an Iranian national bank branch in the heart of the capital that will almost certainly bring Iran into further conflict with American forces who have detained a number of Iranian operatives here in recent weeks.
The ambassador, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, said Sunday that Iran was prepared to offer Iraqi forces training, equipment and advisers for what he called "the security fight." In the economic area, Qomi said, Iran is ready to assume major responsibility for the reconstruction of Iraq, an area of notable failure on the part of the United States since American-led forces overthrew Saddam Hussein in the invasion nearly four years ago.
Qomi also acknowledged, for the first time, that two Iranians seized and later released by American forces last month were security officials, as the United States had maintained. But he said that they were engaged in legitimate discussions with the Iraqi government and should not have been detained.
Qomi's remarks, in a 90-minute interview at the Iranian Embassy here, amounted to the most authoritative and substantive response the Iranians have made yet to increasingly belligerent accusations by the United States that Iran is acting against American interests in Iraq. President George W. Bush has said that the American

military is authorized to take whatever action necessary against Iranians in Iraq found to be engaged in actions deemed hostile.
The Iranian ambassador abruptly agreed to a longstanding request for the interview – made repeatedly after the first American seizure of Iranians here on Dec. 21 – and seemed eager to rebut the accusations and assert Iran's legitimate interests in its neighbor.
The political and diplomatic standoff that followed the Dec. 21 raid until the Iranians were released nine days later has contributed, along with a dispute over the Iranian nuclear program, to greatly increased tensions between the United States and Iran.
This month, American forces detained five more Iranians in a raid on a diplomatic office in the northern city of Erbil.
While providing few details, the United States has said that evidence gleaned in the Baghdad raid, made on an Iraqi Shiite leader's residential compound, proves the Iranians were involved in planning attacks on American and Iraqi forces.
Qomi minimized the evidence that the American military has said it collected, including maps of Baghdad delineating Sunni, Shiite and mixed neighborhoods – the kind of maps, some American officials have said, that would be useful for militias engaged in ethnic slaughter.
Qomi said the maps were so common and easily obtainable that they proved nothing.
He did not say whether he believed the maps bore sectarian markings or address other pieces of evidence the Americans said that they had found, like manifests of weapons and material relating to the technology of sophisticated roadside bombs.
But that is not why the Iranians were in the compound, he said.
"They worked in the security sector in the Islamic Republic, that's clear," Qomi said, referring to Iran.
But he said that the Iranians were in Iraq because "the two countries agreed to solve the security problems." The Iranians "went to meet with the Iraqi side," he said.
In a surprise disclosure, Qomi said Iran would soon open the national bank branch in Iraq, in effect creating a new Iranian financial institution right under the Americans' noses. A senior Iraqi banking official, Hussein al-Uzri, confirmed that Iran had received a license to open the new bank, which Uzri said would apparently be the first wholly owned subsidiary bank of a foreign country in Iraq.
"This will enhance trade between the two countries," Uzri said.
A number of American and Iraqi officials said Sunday that it was difficult to respond to Qomi's statements until they had been communicated through official channels.
A spokesman for the American Embassy in Baghdad, Lou Fintor, declined to address the statements directly, but said that the American-led forces here continued "to assist the Iraqi government in securing its borders and preventing foreign interference in Iraqi affairs."
Sean McCormack, a State Department spokesman, said Sunday that the United States had a significant body of evidence tying Iran to sectarian attacks inside Iraq.
"There is a high degree of confidence in the information that we already have, and we are constantly accumulating more," McCormack said.
He did not address any of the specifics of Qomi's comments about Iran's plans for stronger economic and security ties in Iraq, but said that Iraq currently was playing "a negative role in many respects" in the country.

[156] No alliance against Iran – Abdullah, in “Arab News” 28.01.2007:
Saudi Arabia yesterday denied suggestions that it was forging an alliance against Iran. "This is completely untrue and against our policy," Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah said referring to Iranian media reports. "We don't interfere in the affairs of others," he said.
In an interview with Kuwait's Asseyassa Arabic daily, King Abdullah also emphasized that the campaign to spread Shiism among Sunni Arab countries would not succeed as the majority of Muslims follow the Sunni ideology. "We are following up on this matter and we are aware of the dimensions of spreading Shiism and where it has reached," the king said. "We believe this process will not achieve its goal because the majority of Sunni Muslims will never change their belief and are immune to any attempts by other sects to influence them or diminish their historical power."

The Saudi leader expressed optimism about the future of the Arab nation. There is nothing that prevents us from adopting unanimous decisions and a unified ideology," he said. "Unanimous decisions will make us strong globally." Referring to Shiite-Sunni conflict, the king said he was following the matter with caution. "If we handle the situation properly, then there will not be any danger," he said. "But if we fail, problems may crop up here and there. We hope it will not happen."
Referring to his recent meeting with Iranian envoy Ali Larijani, King Abdullah said the Kingdom's foreign policy "does not help anybody to attack anybody else, neither Iran nor any other country." The king also stressed that Saudi Arabia would not allow anybody to attack the Kingdom or other Arab countries that have signed security agreements with Riyadh.
"Saudi leaders and the Saudi state know their limits in dealing with nations, East and West," said the king. "I explained this to Larijani and advised him to pass the message on to his government and its followers. If we want to achieve success in our regional policy, we have to establish comfortable international relations for the Gulf region because the dangers (the Iranian government) could fall into will fall upon all of us."
King Abdullah said he had also advised the Iranians not to endanger the Gulf region through their policies. "Any state that carries out unwise actions should be responsible for its actions before the region's countries," he said in the interview that was also carried by the Saudi Press Agency. Abdullah called on Arab countries to adopt a unified stance on major issues such as Palestine.
"We should not allow other states to interfere in our issues or take the help of others to resolve our Arab issues," he said. "We don't want anybody to interfere in our issues in order to become stronger."
Speaking about domestic matters, Abdullah said he was concentrating his attention on improving the government's performance and taking measures to ensure just distribution of wealth all over the country. He also noted his endeavors to scale down bureaucratic procedures.
Abdullah said the Kingdom's efforts to promote moderation among its people have proven fruitful.
He commended the valor displayed by security forces in defeating terrorists by carrying out pre-emptive operations. "Nobody is providing cover to terrorists now as our citizens are convinced that this is not the way to invite people to Islam," he said. "Terrorism is totally against the teachings of Islam, it's not a call to reform but rather a call to destruction and corruption."
He said Saudi Arabia would play a leading role in implementing the resolutions adopted by GCC summits.

[157] Vgl. die Eintragung am 10.01.2007 in dieser Chronologie.

[158] Constantin Graf von Hoensbroech: „Wir sind privilegiert, zusammenzuleben:
Im Jahr 2001 war er "Mann des Jahres" in Israel, dreimal wurde er für den Friedensnobelpreis vorgeschlagen und ein Film widmete sich ihm unter dem Titel: "Prophet im eigenen Land". Elias Chacour, 1939 in Galiläa in eine palästinensische Familie geboren, studierte Theologe in Paris und später als erster Araber die Tora und den Talmud an der Hebräischen Universität in Jerusalem. Vom Frieden in seiner Heimat ist der heutige Erzbischof von Galiläa fest überzeugt.
Israel hat seit einigen Tagen erstmals in seiner Geschichte einen arabischen Minister. Hat Sie die Ernennung von Raleb Madschadele überrascht?
Chacour: Das ist natürlich ein sehr positiver Schritt, von dem ich aber nicht überrascht wurde. An Weihnachten waren zahlreiche Minister des israelischen Kabinetts bei mir in Haifa und Verteidigungsminister Amir Peretz hat mich gefragt, was ich davon halte, einen Araber zum Minister zu machen.
Was haben Sie ihm geantwortet?
Chacour: Dass das kein taktischer oder propagandistischer Zug oder eine leere Versprechung der Regierung sein darf. Nur wenn ein arabischer Minister auch politische Relevanz bekommt, kann er die Integration der arabischen Bürger in Israel voranbringen.
Madschadele ist Minister ohne Geschäftsbereich…
Chacour: …und genau hier muss jetzt schnell der nächste Schritt erfolgen. Wenn die Ernennung Madschadeles, die auf die Initiative der Arbeitspartei zurückgeht,

zum Hintergrund hat, bei der nächsten Wahl die Stimmen der Araber für die Arbeitspartei zu gewinnen, ist er bereits diskreditiert. Es muss daher rasch transparent werden, welche politische Kompetenz, Autorität und Zuständigkeit Madschadele hat.
Amir Peretz, der Chef der Arbeitspartei, sagte, er sei davon überzeugt, dass Madschadele eine Lücke in der israelischen Gesellschaft schließen kann.
Chacour: Dazu kann er eben nur beitragen, wenn er politische Handlungsmöglichkeiten bekommt und mithelfen kann, Diskriminierungen gegen die palästinensischen Araber in Israel abzubauen und an der Verbesserung ihrer Bürgerrechte mitzuwirken.
Welche Relevanz hat die Ernennung eines arabischen Ministers in Israel für die Araber in den besetzten Gebieten?
Chacour: Keine. Wir müssen klar trennen zwischen den Arabern in Israel und denen, in den besetzten Gebieten. Die Araber in Israel sind Bürger dieses Landes, und sie sind stolz darauf. Aber ihnen gehrt es darum, als vollwertige Bürger dieses Landes leben zu dürfen. Die Araber in den besetzten Gebieten haben keine Bürgerrechte. Das einzige Recht, das sie haben, ist Kinder zu zeugen. Ihr Ziel ist ein ganz anderes: die Befreiung von der Besatzung.
Nach den jüngsten Entwicklungen in den Autonomiegebieten hat man den Eindruck, dass die Rivalitäten zwischen Fatah und Hamas so groß sind, dass die Palästinenser am Rande eines Bürgerkriegs stehen.
Natürlich gibt es Gegensätze zwischen Hamas und Fatah. Aber schauen Sie sich an, wo die Ursachen sind. Israels Politik hat doch die Hamas erst hervorgebracht, israelische Siedlungen in den besetzten Gebieten wirken wie Geschwüre und der Mauerbau erweckt den Anschein einer Apartheidpolitik. Israel soll einfach in Israel bleiben, dann kann auch die Zwei-Staaten-Lösung realisiert werden. Davon sind wir allerdings derzeit weit entfernt. Die Gewalt entsteht, weil keine Rechtsprechung und Gerechtigkeit da ist.
Wird Frieden überhaupt möglich sein?
Ja, absolut.
Was macht Sie da so sicher?
Chacour: Die geschichtliche Erfahrung. Seit Jahrhunderten haben Juden gleichberechtigt in arabischen Ländern gelebt. Heute geht es daher nicht um die Frage, ob wir zusammenleben können, sondern darum, ob wir zu dem zurückkehren können, was uns die Geschichte gelehrt hat. Wenn alle Seiten ihren modernen Fanatismus aufgeben, können wir auch wieder dies normale Zusammenleben erreichen, wie es seit Jahrhunderten normal gewesen ist. Israel ist nicht integriert im Nahen Osten, und es ist an der Zeit, dass deutlich wird, dass Israel ein Teil des Nahen Ostens ist. Die verschiedenen Bevölkerungsgruppen sind seit Tausenden von Jahren hier und erheben alle Anspruch auf das gleiche Land. Sie müssen erkennen: Das ist unser gemeinsames Land.
Was bedeutet das praktisch?
Chacour: Dass wir uns als Ziel die Verwirklichung einer säkularen Demokratie setzen, in der jeder frei ist, seine Religion zu leben.
Eine wunderbare Vision, die leider wie eine Illusion klingt…
Chacour: Es gibt so viele Ansätze und Bemühungen und Gespräche, um dieses Ziel zu erreichen. Nehmen Sie nur die Mar Elias Universität, die erste arabische Hochschule in Israel. Dort studieren israelische Christen, Muslime und Juden, aber auch Studenten aus anderen Ländern und leben vor, wie Völkerverständigung zwischen Bevölkerungsgruppen funktionieren kann. Das Bewusstsein wächst, dass wir nicht dazu verdammt sind, miteinander zu leben, sondern dass wir privilegiert sind, zusammenzuleben. Das habe ich sehr persönlich erlebt. Ich bin ein stolzer Palästinenser, ein Araber, ein Christ und ein Bürger des Staates Israel. Lange Zeit habe ich in dem Bewusstsein gelebt, dass ich mit vielen Gegensätzlichkeiten in meiner Biografie zurechtkommen muss. Mittlerweile weiß ich, dass das keine Gegensätze sind, sondern alles für mich gleichrangig von Bedeutung ist.
Welche Bedeutung kommt den Christen in Israel zu?
Chacour: Bei den staatlichen Autoritäten setzt sich immer mehr die Bereitschaft und Überzeugung durch, dass die Christen als Moderatoren im Dienst der Versöhnung, als Brückenbauer wirken können. Ich erwähnte ja das Treffen an Weihnachten mit Ministern: Solche informellen Kontakte gibt es sehr viele, und sie können sehr viel bewegen. Die Minister kommen nicht einfach vorbei, um einmal

nett `Hallo' zu sagen. Sie kommen, weil sie sich ganz konkret politischen Rat suchen. Das hat vielfältige Auswirkungen auf das alltägliche Zusammenleben.
Christen sind im Heiligen Land eine Minderheit. Wie wichtig ist die Solidarität von außen?
Chacour: Das Bewusstsein, einer großen weltweiten Gemeinschaft anzugehören, ist enorm wichtig und stärkend. Natürlich auch in materieller Hinsicht. Dabei kommt es aber immer darauf an, den Grundsatz der Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe zu beachten. Das heißt beispielsweise, dass wir nicht wollen, dass Deutschland uns eine Schule baut, sondern, dass wir mit deutscher Hilfe eine Schule bauen können. Ich hoffe daher auch auf den Tag, an dem wir gemeinsam zusammensitzen und überlegen, was wir nun gemeinsam für Länder in der Dritten Welt tun können.
Würde ein Besuch von Papst Benedikt XVI. in Israel die Situation verbessern? Plant der Papst eine Reise ins Heilige Land?
Das müssen Sie ihn selber fragen, aber es ist derzeit überhaupt nicht absehbar. Ein Papstbesuch macht nur dann Sinn, und der Heilige Vater hat es mir selbst gesagt, wenn er nicht einfach als Besucher und Pilger kommt, sondern auch Ergebnisse zu erwarten sind. Das heißt, dass das Konkordat zwischen Israel und dem Vatikan unterschriftsreif sein muss, dass die Rechte der Christen in Israel ebenso geklärt sind wie die Eigentumsfragen der Katholischen Kirche. Auch praktische Dinge wie die Arbeit von ausländischen Ordensleuten und Priestern in Israel müssen geregelt sein.
Gestatten Sie mir abschließend eine sehr persönliche Frage: Sie sind Erzbischof von Galiläa und somit für das Gebiet verantwortlich, aus dem Jesus Christus stammt. Was bedeutet das für Sie?
Chacour: Ich bin tatsächlich der einzige Bischof in der Katholischen Kirche, der von sich sagen kann, dass Jesus und dessen Jünger zu meiner Diözese gehören. Und manchmal kann ich nachts nicht richtig schlafen, weil ich von der Tatsache überwältigt werde: Gott, du hat mich in diese Region, in die Heimat Jesu gestellt. Das ist ein unbeschreibliches Gefühl, ein Gefühl, wie es eigentlich für die Mentalität aller Christen in dieser Region prägend ist. Denn wir leben aus dem Glauben und in dem Bewusstsein, dass Christus wirklich bei uns ist, dass er jeden Tag da ist und nicht vor 2000 Jahren hier war. Was sind schon 2000 Jahre?

[159] Vgl. die Eintragungen am 24.08.2006 und 06.09.2006 in dieser Chronologie.

[160] David Ignatius: Rice's Strategy Reset, in "Washington Post" 16.01.2007:
What's America's strategy in the Middle East? Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice this week sketched a new framework based on what she calls the "realignment" of states that want to contain Iran and its radical Muslim proxies.
In an interview Tuesday, Rice summarized the new strategy that has been coming together over the past several months. Although many of its elements have been previewed in recent weeks by commentators such as Columbia University scholar Gary Sick, Rice's comments were an unusually detailed public explanation of the new American effort to create a de facto alliance between Israel and moderate Arab states against Iranian extremism.
Rice said the new approach reflects growing Arab concern about Iran's attempt to project power through its proxies: "After the war in Lebanon, the Middle East really did begin to clarify into an extremist element allied with Iran, including Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas. On the other side were the targets of this extremism – the Lebanese, the Iraqis, the Palestinians – and those who want to resist, such as the Saudis, Egypt and Jordan."
America's recent show of force against Iran -- seizing Iranian operatives in Iraq and sending additional warships to the Persian Gulf -- was part of this broader effort to reassure the Saudis and others that, despite its troubles in Iraq, America remains a reliable ally against a rising Iran. "The U.S. has to demonstrate that it is present in the Gulf, and going to be present in the Gulf," Rice told me.
Realignment is linked with a new U.S. effort to forge peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Rice is encouraging both sides to explore "final-status issues" – such as borders, the status of Jerusalem and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to a homeland – rather than remain deadlocked over the so-called road map.
The effort to contain Iranian-backed pressure took on new urgency this week, as Hezbollah's campaign against the government of Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad

Siniora spawned a spasm of violence that left at least four dead. America, France and Saudi Arabia quickly organized a $7.6 billion financial rescue package for Siniora, but that hasn't stemmed the rising sectarian tension in Lebanon between Sunnis who back Siniora and Shiite supporters of Hezbollah.
Critics may see Rice's realignment strategy as another high-risk roll of the dice by the Bush administration in a region that is already polarized by the Iraq war and sectarian conflict. These critics may also question the central role of Saudi Arabia, a conservative Islamic monarchy that many Arabs regard as a bastion of the status quo.
"The reception will be very skeptical" among some Arabs, cautioned one prominent official who is normally among the most pro-American in the region. "Increasing the fault line between Sunnis and Shiites is a mistake," he argued. State Department officials would counter that it was Iran that moved the fault line by encouraging Hezbollah's provocative behavior in Lebanon.
The Bush administration's thinking about realignment helps explain why it has resisted engaging Syria and Iran, as recommended by the Baker-Hamilton report. As Rice put it, "You have a 'pan' movement, across the region. The war in Lebanon crystallized it for everyone. You can't just leave it there… If you concentrate on engaging Syria and Iran, you may lose the chance to do the realignment."
On Syria, Rice said the administration is seeking a change of policy rather than regime change. Asked about an offer made in an interview with me last month by Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem to help the U.S. provide greater security in Iraq, she said: "If the Syrians want to stabilize Iraq, why don't they do it?" As for Israeli interest in exploring the Syrian initiative, she noted recent private peace feelers between Syrians and Israelis and suggested that if the Israelis decide there is something important, they will pursue it.
The administration's tougher stance against Iran arguably has already produced some results. Iran's firebrand president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, appears to be in political trouble with the ruling mullahs, in part because his reckless talk alienated other Muslims. But the strongest leverage against Iran appears to be the West's unified diplomatic coalition. "The Security Council resolution [condemning Iran's nuclear program and mandating mild sanctions] has had more of an effect than I thought it would," Rice said.
The realignment strategy poses as many questions as it answers -- not least the anomaly of supporting Sunni resistance to Iran at the same time the U.S. augments its military support for a Shiite-led government in Iraq. But as with any strategy, Rice's realignment idea has the virtue of offering a basis for discussion and careful thinking about a region perched on the edge of a volcano.

[161] Gershon Baskin: The missing agenda, in “Jerusalem Post”-online 23.01.2007:
It has been reported that the chief of staff of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's office, and his chief political adviser, have been instructed to find an agenda for the upcoming trilateral summit meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. While these two gentlemen are searching for an agenda for the meeting, perhaps they should spend some time finding an agenda for the government as well.
In order for Prime Minister Olmert to survive politically, he should get out of the "survival mode" and get into the business of leading.
In Israel 2007, leading means having vision and knowing how to translate it into reality. The government of Israel has no vision and no direction beyond political survival. In the dearth of any political horizons and because the government has failed to transmit any sense of hope to the Israeli people, we have recently been exposed to a variety of politicians who see themselves as potential leaders busy presenting all kinds of new peace plans and ideas.
It is really quite ironic that politicians are competing on the domestic scene by presenting ideas for advancing peace. This bazaar phenomenon occurs not because we have so many peace-loving activists among our politicians, but because these politicians know that the people of Israel are fed up with the current reality and want to believe and hope for a future of peace.
Because Ehud Olmert is not an ideological prime minister but the ultimate pragmatist, perhaps he has the ability to take a transcendental leap into real leadership and to take steps that would trigger the creation of an entirely new

environment. In the current reality of continuing deterioration of relations with the Palestinians, and a continuing diminishing image of Israel's national strength (which may be more than just image), demonstrated by the failure to win a war which should have never been initiated in the first place, there is a real need to implement a policy which could actually change reality.
There is no need for another "maintenance visit" by Rice. Unfortunately we also know that there is no reason to delude ourselves that she will propose that Olmert and Abbas actually begin to address the real issues in the conflict. The expectations for the upcoming trilateral summit should be kept low in order to preempt even more disappointment.
IT SHOULD be clear that the US administration under George W. Bush is not going to change its policies in its last two years in office. There were hopes that Bush would adopt some of the good recommendations from the Baker-Hamilton report, specifically those dealing with the Israeli-Arab conflict. But if Bush's good friend Jim Baker cannot convince him, we should understand that the Bush administration is an obstacle to Israeli-Arab peace. The best thing Rice could offer at this time is to step aside and allow for other initiatives to move forward. If there is any success, the US can join in at a later stage.
If Olmert is serious about wanting to lead, than he must get serious about finding a peace agenda and then implementing it. We don't need words and spin doctors, we need action. We need "triggering events" that have the power to create a new mind-set and a new environment that would allow the Israeli and Palestinian people to once again believe that peace is possible.
The main obstacles are not wide gaps between the sides on the main issues in conflict – most Israelis and most Palestinians agree on the main elements of possible agreements. The main obstacle is the lack of a process to get us there, mainly because of the past six years of violence and destruction that has wiped out hope.
THE SADAT visit to Israel was a triggering event. The Rabin-Arafat handshake was another. Triggering events change reality, and that is what we need. There are triggering events that set processes in motion and are powerful because they are unconditional and do not have to be interdependent.
Olmert could immediately change the reality of life in the occupied territories – he could order and really enforce the removal of hundreds of roadblocks, checkpoints, and obstacles throughout the West Bank that turn the lives of millions of people into a daily hell. The government could decide to implement its own decisions and enforce the aw vis-à-vis the settlers and actually remove all unauthorized (illegal) outposts in the West Bank. It could also pass a law that would enable settlers in the West Bank who wish to return to Israel to receive compensation for their homes even before Israel withdraws from the territory.
With 10,000 Palestinians in Israeli prisons, most under administrative detention (arrested without charge and imprisoned without trial), the government could release hundreds of them. Olmert could order the extension to the West Bank of the Gaza cease-fire, which, even though not observed 100%, has significantly lessened Kassam rockets being shot into Israel.
MAHMOUD ABBAS could also announce and implement a whole series of steps that would serve as a triggering event for Israelis. These too would be independent of whatever Israel does or doesn't do. The steps are aimed at changing reality. Abbas must finalize the creation of a national unity government to demonstrate leadership. He must bring about the immediate release of Gilad Shalit. He and his forces must create law and order, particularly in Gaza. Abbas must devote real effort to finding and destroying the Rafah tunnels used for smuggling. He could once again deal with the issue of the daily Kassam rockets shot into Israel. Abbas must continue to address and deal with the issue of incitement and hate in schools and in the media.
Both leaders should also consider steps beyond those suggested above. The best initiative for moving back into a genuine peace process is the Arab League peace initiative that offers land for peace and normalization with 22 Arab states. Supported unanimously by the Arab League twice in the past four years, this initiative offers comprehensive peace with all our neighbors.
If Olmert was a real leader he would invite Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa to come to Israel and speak in the Knesset to the people of Israel in order

to present the Arab initiative directly to them. Abbas should do the same in Palestine. A trilateral summit between Olmert, Abbas and Moussa would be a lot more substantial in this context than another agenda-less Rice visit.
There is a genuine peace agenda floating around searching for genuine leadership – it is time to bring the two together.

[162] Im gleichlautenden Sinne der Kommentar von Yossi Alpher „Mindestens noch zwei Jahre“ in der Menüleiste „Bestandsaufnahmen und Perspektiven“ dieser Homepage.

[163] Text der Beiruter Erklärung in der Menüleiste „Begleitende Dokumente” dieser Homepage.

[164] Yossi Ben-Ari: Time to adopt ‘Madrid Model’. Israel should pursue peace agreement based on Saudi initiative, in “ynet” 27.01.2007:
Olmert's harsh and unequivocal denial regarding official Israeli involvement in ongoing dialogue with the Syrians again poured cold water on those who view such agreement as an ultimate, immediate need. Even if earlier a certain chance emerged to discretely look into Assad's intentions, now it appears this chance was curtailed at an early stage.
Lebanon, meanwhile, rejected Olmert's call for a separate agreement. It is difficult to find comfort in the Palestinian arena either: Hamas' ongoing refusal to recognize Israel; the ongoing Qassam rocket fire; the reality of internal violence, on the verge of a civil war; and the inability to establish a national unity government on the Palestinian side – all of the above leave a very slim chance for diplomatic progress.
This is the time to abandon the attempts to reach separate agreements with "selected" partners around us. What worked in the past with Egypt and Jordan is currently inapplicable vis-à-vis Ramallah, Beirut, or Damascus. There's no choice but to return to the Madrid formula of 1991: The promotion of a regional and comprehensive agreement in the Middle East. We may fear that by returning to the multi-party channel, Israel will have to face many parties on its own. However, the international community will be there to balance the picture.
The one clear agreement among all participants in the latest Madrid Convention was that we should be going back to a comprehensive format based on the Saudi initiative (which was adopted in 2002 in the Arab League summit and was ratified again recently by Arab foreign ministers.) The tragedy of this special offer was the fact it was proposed during the second Intifada's most devastating suicide bombings of all times. Under such circumstances the Israeli government could not be expected to seriously address a new peace initiative.
Sunni protective belt
However, even in later years this attractive option did not receive the due attention. It certainly appeared on the desk of decision-makers in Jerusalem more than once, but they did not allow it to take off, at least to an initial dialogue meant to clarify the intentions behind it – and that's a pity, as besides the difficulties presented by the initiative, it also includes many positive aspects for Israel.
This is the first (and only) peace plan that all 22 Arab states are party to. Therefore, any obligation to Israel in the agreement will be honored by each one of them and all of them together.
– The initiative's objective is a comprehensive peace agreement, which in light of the Iranian-Shiite threat has become a clearer Israeli interest than ever and can provide us with a moderate Sunni protective belt.
– The initiative is committed to providing security to all regional countries. Its implementation will bring about an end to the conflict, recognition of Israel (as declared by the Arab League's secretary general) and full normalization in relations with Arab states.
– The plan recognizes that a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem, even if based on UN Resolution 194, must be agreed-upon by all parties. In other words, Israel cannot be forced to accept a solution it does not agree to.
– As absurd as this may sound, the plan's demand for Israeli recognition of an independent Palestinian state has become a clear Israeli interest, perhaps even more so than for the Palestinians. After all, the Hamas movement doesn't insist on it (it makes do with integration into the Islamic world or sets its sights on a "state of

all its citizens") while for Israel this is perhaps the last opportunity to entrench the principle of "two states for two nations."
As to the problems inherent in the plan (the demand for full withdrawal to the 1967 borders, the absence of an option to trade off territory, and the east Jerusalem question,) we would do well to listen to former Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher's kind offer. In Madrid he invited Israel to request any change it wants in the initiative, as long as it would be possible to start discussing it jointly.
A "Yes" by Olmert would constitute a political lifesaver. By merely inviting to the Knesset three Arab presidents (Assad, Mubarak and Abbas,) two kings (Jordan's Abdullah and Saudi Arabia's Abdullah,) one Prime Minister (Siniora) and Arab League Secretary General (Amre Moussa,) Olmert would be credited with a constitutive event and guarantee his place in the pantheon of Israeli history.
What is currently impossible to achieve bilaterally will be more possible in a group: The influence of the Arab collective on the Palestinians would certainly be stronger than that of Israel alone. Finally, with backing on the part of Israel's civil society and a little determination by the Madrid steering team, Bush won't be a bother, and once the first understandings are reached, he will certainly join the successful journey.

[165] President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address, 23.01.2007:
Madam Speaker, Vice President Cheney, Members of Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens: This rite of custom brings us together at a defining hour – when decisions are hard and courage is tested. We enter the year 2007 with large endeavors underway, and others that are ours to begin. In all of this, much is asked of us. We must have the will to face difficult challenges and determined enemies – and the wisdom to face them together.
Some in this Chamber are new to the House and Senate – and I congratulate the Democratic majority. Congress has changed, but our responsibilities have not. Each of us is guided by our own convictions – and to these we must stay faithful. Yet we are all held to the same standards, and called to serve the same good purposes: To extend this Nation's prosperity ... to spend the people's money wisely ... to solve problems, not leave them to future generations ... to guard America against all evil, and to keep faith with those we have sent forth to defend us.
We are not the first to come here with government divided and uncertainty in the air. Like many before us, we can work through our differences, and achieve big things for the American people. Our citizens don't much care which side of the aisle we sit on – as long as we are willing to cross that aisle when there is work to be done. Our job is to make life better for our fellow Americans, and help them to build a future of hope and opportunity – and this is the business before us tonight.
A future of hope and opportunity begins with a growing economy – and that is what we have. We are now in the 41st month of uninterrupted job growth – in a recovery that has created 7.2 million new jobs ... so far. Unemployment is low, inflation is low, and wages are rising. This economy is on the move – and our job is to keep it that way, not with more government but with more enterprise.
Next week, I will deliver a full report on the state of our economy. Tonight, I want to discuss three economic reforms that deserve to be priorities for this Congress.
First, we must balance the federal budget. We can do so without raising taxes. What we need to do is impose spending discipline in Washington, D.C. We set a goal of cutting the deficit in half by 2009 – and met that goal three years ahead of schedule. Now let us take the next step. In the coming weeks, I will submit a budget that eliminates the federal deficit within the next five years. I ask you to make the same commitment. Together, we can restrain the spending appetite of the federal government, and balance the federal budget.
Next, there is the matter of earmarks. These special interest items are often slipped into bills at the last hour – when not even C-SPAN is watching. In 2005 alone, the number of earmarks grew to over 13,000 and totaled nearly $18 billion. Even worse, over 90 percent of earmarks never make it to the floor of the House and Senate – they are dropped into Committee reports that are not even part of the bill that arrives on my desk. You did not vote them into law. I did not sign them into law. Yet they are treated as if they have the force of law. The time has come to end this practice. So let us work together to reform the budget process ... expose every earmark to the light of day and to a vote in Congress and cut the number and cost of earmarks at least in half by the end of this session.

Finally, to keep this economy strong we must take on the challenge of entitlements. Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid are commitments of conscience – and so it is our duty to keep them permanently sound. Yet we are failing in that duty – and this failure will one day leave our children with three bad options: huge tax increases, huge deficits, or huge and immediate cuts in benefits. Everyone in this Chamber knows this to be true – yet somehow we have not found it in ourselves to act. So let us work together and do it now. With enough good sense and good will, you and I can fix Medicare and Medicaid – and save Social Security.
Spreading opportunity and hope in America also requires public schools that give children the knowledge and character they need in life. Five years ago, we rose above partisan differences to pass the No Child Left Behind Act – preserving local control, raising standards in public schools, and holding those schools accountable for results. And because we acted, students are performing better in reading and math, and minority students are closing the achievement gap.
Now the task is to build on this success, without watering down standards .... without taking control from local communities ... and without backsliding and calling it reform. We can lift student achievement even higher by giving local leaders flexibility to turn around failing schools ... and by giving families with children stuck in failing schools the right to choose something better. We must increase funds for students who struggle – and make sure these children get the special help they need. And we can make sure our children are prepared for the jobs of the future, and our country is more competitive, by strengthening math and science skills. The No Child Left Behind Act has worked for America's children – and I ask Congress to reauthorize this good law.
A future of hope and opportunity requires that all our citizens have affordable and available healthcare. When it comes to healthcare, government has an obligation to care for the elderly, the disabled, and poor children. We will meet those responsibilities. For all other Americans, private health insurance is the best way to meet their needs. But many Americans cannot afford a health insurance policy.
Tonight, I propose two new initiatives to help more Americans afford their own insurance. First, I propose a standard tax deduction for health insurance that will be like the standard tax deduction for dependents. Families with health insurance will pay no income or payroll taxes on $15,000 of their income. Single Americans with health insurance will pay no income or payroll taxes on $7,500 of their income. With this reform, more than 100 million men, women, and children who are now covered by employer-provided insurance will benefit from lower tax bills.
At the same time, this reform will level the playing field for those who do not get health insurance through their job. For Americans who now purchase health insurance on their own, my proposal would mean a substantial tax savings – $4,500 for a family of four making $60,000 a year. And for the millions of other Americans who have no health insurance at all, this deduction would help put a basic private health insurance plan within their reach. Changing the tax code is a vital and necessary step to making healthcare affordable for more Americans.
My second proposal is to help the states that are coming up with innovative ways to cover the uninsured. States that make basic private health insurance available to all their citizens should receive federal funds to help them provide this coverage to the poor and the sick. I have asked the Secretary of Health and Human Services to work with Congress to take existing federal funds and use them to create "Affordable Choices" grants. These grants would give our Nation's governors more money and more flexibility to get private health insurance to those most in need.
There are many other ways that Congress can help. We need to expand Health Savings Accounts ... help small businesses through Association Health Plans ... reduce costs and medical errors with better information technology ... encourage price transparency ... and protect good doctors from junk lawsuits by passing medical liability reform. And in all we do, we must remember that the best healthcare decisions are made not by government and insurance companies, but by patients and their doctors.
Extending hope and opportunity in our country requires an immigration system worthy of America – with laws that are fair and borders that are secure. When laws and borders are routinely violated, this harms the interests of our country. To secure our border, we are doubling the size of the Border Patrol – and funding new infrastructure and technology.

Yet even with all these steps, we cannot fully secure the border unless we take pressure off the border – and that requires a temporary worker program. We should establish a legal and orderly path for foreign workers to enter our country to work on a temporary basis. As a result, they won't have to try to sneak in – and that will leave border agents free to chase down drug smugglers, and criminals, and terrorists. We will enforce our immigration laws at the worksite, and give employers the tools to verify the legal status of their workers – so there is no excuse left for violating the law. We need to uphold the great tradition of the melting pot that welcomes and assimilates new arrivals. And we need to resolve the status of the illegal immigrants who are already in our country – without animosity and without amnesty.

Convictions run deep in this Capitol when it comes to immigration. Let us have a serious, civil, and conclusive debate – so that you can pass, and I can sign, comprehensive immigration reform into law. Extending hope and opportunity depends on a stable supply of energy that keeps America's economy running and America's environment clean. For too long our Nation has been dependent on foreign oil. And this dependence leaves us more vulnerable to hostile regimes, and to terrorists – who could cause huge disruptions of oil shipments ... raise the price of oil .... and do great harm to our economy.

It is in our vital interest to diversify America's energy supply – and the way forward is through technology. We must continue changing the way America generates electric power – by even greater use of clean coal technology ... solar and wind energy ... and clean, safe nuclear power. We need to press on with battery research for plug-in and hybrid vehicles, and expand the use of clean diesel vehicles and biodiesel fuel. We must continue investing in new methods of producing ethanol – using everything from wood chips, to grasses, to agricultural wastes.

We have made a lot of progress, thanks to good policies in Washington and the strong response of the market. Now even more dramatic advances are within reach. Tonight, I ask Congress to join me in pursuing a great goal. Let us build on the work we have done and reduce gasoline usage in the United States by 20 percent in the next ten years – thereby cutting our total imports by the equivalent of three-quarters of all the oil we now import from the Middle East.

To reach this goal, we must increase the supply of alternative fuels, by setting a mandatory Fuels Standard to require 35 billion gallons of renewable and alternative fuels in 2017 – this is nearly five times the current target. At the same time, we need to reform and modernize fuel economy standards for cars the way we did for light trucks – and conserve up to eight and a half billion more gallons of gasoline by 2017.

Achieving these ambitious goals will dramatically reduce our dependence on foreign oil, but will not eliminate it. So as we continue to diversify our fuel supply, we must also step up domestic oil production in environmentally sensitive ways. And to further protect America against severe disruptions to our oil supply, I ask Congress to double the current capacity of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. America is on the verge of technological breakthroughs that will enable us to live our lives less dependent on oil. These technologies will help us become better stewards of the environment – and they will help us to confront the serious challenge of global climate change.

A future of hope and opportunity requires a fair, impartial system of justice. The lives of citizens across our Nation are affected by the outcome of cases pending in our federal courts. And we have a shared obligation to ensure that the federal courts have enough judges to hear those cases and deliver timely rulings. As President, I have a duty to nominate qualified men and women to vacancies on the federal bench. And the United States Senate has a duty as well – to give those nominees a fair hearing, and a prompt up-or-down vote on the Senate floor.

For all of us in this room, there is no higher responsibility than to protect the people of this country from danger. Five years have come and gone since we saw the scenes and felt the sorrow that terrorists can cause. We have had time to take stock of our situation. We have added many critical protections to guard the homeland. We know with certainty that the horrors of that September morning were just a glimpse of what the terrorists intend for us – unless we stop them.

With the distance of time, we find ourselves debating the causes of conflict and the course we have followed. Such debates are essential when a great democracy faces great questions. Yet one question has surely been settled – that to win the war on terror we must take the fight to the enemy.
From the start, America and our allies have protected our people by staying on the offense. The enemy knows that the days of comfortable sanctuary, easy movement, steady financing, and free flowing communications are long over. For the terrorists, life since Nine-Eleven has never been the same.
Our success in this war is often measured by the things that did not happen. We cannot know the full extent of the attacks that we and our allies have prevented – but here is some of what we do know: We stopped an al Qaeda plot to fly a hijacked airplane into the tallest building on the West Coast. We broke up a Southeast Asian terrorist cell grooming operatives for attacks inside the United States. We uncovered an al Qaeda cell developing anthrax to be used in attacks against America. And just last August, British authorities uncovered a plot to blow up passenger planes bound for America over the Atlantic Ocean. For each life saved, we owe a debt of gratitude to the brave public servants who devote their lives to finding the terrorists and stopping them.
Every success against the terrorists is a reminder of the shoreless ambitions of this enemy. The evil that inspired and rejoiced in Nine-Eleven is still at work in the world. And so long as that is the case, America is still a Nation at war.
In the minds of the terrorists, this war began well before September 11th, and will not end until their radical vision is fulfilled. And these past five years have given us a much clearer view of the nature of this enemy. Al Qaeda and its followers are Sunni extremists, possessed by hatred and commanded by a harsh and narrow ideology. Take almost any principle of civilization, and their goal is the opposite. They preach with threats ... instruct with bullets and bombs ... and promise paradise for the murder of the innocent.
Our enemies are quite explicit about their intentions. They want to overthrow moderate governments, and establish safe havens from which to plan and carry out new attacks on our country. By killing and terrorizing Americans, they want to force our country to retreat from the world and abandon the cause of liberty. They would then be free to impose their will and spread their totalitarian ideology. Listen to this warning from the late terrorist Zarqawi: "We will sacrifice our blood and bodies to put an end to your dreams, and what is coming is even worse." And Osama bin Laden declared: "Death is better than living on this Earth with the unbelievers among us."
These men are not given to idle words, and they are just one camp in the Islamist radical movement. In recent times, it has also become clear that we face an escalating danger from Shia extremists who are just as hostile to America, and are also determined to dominate the Middle East. Many are known to take direction from the regime in Iran, which is funding and arming terrorists like Hezbollah – a group second only to al Qaeda in the American lives it has taken. The Shia and Sunni extremists are different faces of the same totalitarian threat. But whatever slogans they chant, when they slaughter the innocent, they have the same wicked purposes. They want to kill Americans .... kill democracy in the Middle East ... and gain the weapons to kill on an even more horrific scale.
In the sixth year since our Nation was attacked, I wish I could report to you that the dangers have ended. They have not. And so it remains the policy of this government to use every lawful and proper tool of intelligence, diplomacy, law enforcement, and military action to do our duty, to find these enemies, and to protect the American people.
This war is more than a clash of arms – it is a decisive ideological struggle, and the security of our Nation is in the balance. To prevail, we must remove the conditions that inspire blind hatred, and drove 19 men to get onto airplanes and come to kill us. What every terrorist fears most is human freedom – societies where men and women make their own choices, answer to their own conscience, and live by their hopes instead of their resentments. Free people are not drawn to violent and malignant ideologies – and most will choose a better way when they are given a chance. So we advance our own security interests by helping moderates, reformers, and brave voices for democracy. The great question of our day is whether America will help men and women in the Middle East to build free societies

and share in the rights of all humanity. And I say, for the sake of our own security…we must.
In the last two years, we have seen the desire for liberty in the broader Middle East – and we have been sobered by the enemy's fierce reaction. In 2005, the world watched as the citizens of Lebanon raised the banner of the Cedar Revolution ... drove out the Syrian occupiers ... and chose new leaders in free elections. In 2005, the people of Afghanistan defied the terrorists and elected a democratic legislature. And in 2005, the Iraqi people held three national elections – choosing a transitional government ... adopting the most progressive, democratic constitution in the Arab world and then electing a government under that constitution. Despite endless threats from the killers in their midst, nearly 12 million Iraqi citizens came out to vote in a show of hope and solidarity we should never forget.
A thinking enemy watched all of these scenes, adjusted their tactics, and in 2006 they struck back. In Lebanon, assassins took the life of Pierre Gemayel, a prominent participant in the Cedar Revolution. And Hezbollah terrorists, with support from Syria and Iran, sowed conflict in the region and are seeking to undermine Lebanon's legitimately elected government. In Afghanistan, Taliban and al Qaeda fighters tried to regain power by regrouping and engaging Afghan and NATO forces. In Iraq, al Qaeda and other Sunni extremists blew up one of the most sacred places in Shia Islam – the Golden Mosque of Samarra. This atrocity, directed at a Muslim house of prayer, was designed to provoke retaliation from Iraqi Shia – and it succeeded. Radical Shia elements, some of whom receive support from Iran, formed death squads. The result was a tragic escalation of sectarian rage and reprisal that continues to this day.
This is not the fight we entered in Iraq, but it is the fight we are in. Every one of us wishes that this war were over and won. Yet it would not be like us to leave our promises unkept, our friends abandoned, and our own security at risk. Ladies and gentlemen: On this day, at this hour, it is still within our power to shape the outcome of this battle. So let us find our resolve, and turn events toward victory.
We are carrying out a new strategy in Iraq – a plan that demands more from Iraq's elected government, and gives our forces in Iraq the reinforcements they need to complete their mission. Our goal is a democratic Iraq that upholds the rule of law, respects the rights of its people, provides them security, and is an ally in the war on terror.
In order to make progress toward this goal, the Iraqi government must stop the sectarian violence in its capital. But the Iraqis are not yet ready to do this on their own. So we are deploying reinforcements of more than 20,000 additional soldiers and Marines to Iraq. The vast majority will go to Baghdad, where they will help Iraqi forces to clear and secure neighborhoods, and serve as advisers embedded in Iraqi Army units. With Iraqis in the lead, our forces will help secure the city by chasing down terrorists, insurgents, and roaming death squads. And in Anbar province – where al Qaeda terrorists have gathered and local forces have begun showing a willingness to fight them – we are sending an additional 4,000 United States Marines, with orders to find the terrorists and clear them out. We did not drive al Qaeda out of their safe haven in Afghanistan only to let them set up a new safe haven in a free Iraq.
The people of Iraq want to live in peace, and now is the time for their government to act. Iraq's leaders know that our commitment is not open ended. They have promised to deploy more of their own troops to secure Baghdad – and they must do so. They have pledged that they will confront violent radicals of any faction or political party. They need to follow through, and lift needless restrictions on Iraqi and Coalition forces, so these troops can achieve their mission of bringing security to all of the people of Baghdad. Iraq's leaders have committed themselves to a series of benchmarks to achieve reconciliation – to share oil revenues among all of Iraq's citizens ... to put the wealth of Iraq into the rebuilding of Iraq ... to allow more Iraqis to re-enter their nation's civic life ... to hold local elections ... and to take responsibility for security in every Iraqi province. But for all of this to happen, Baghdad must be secured. And our plan will help the Iraqi government take back its capital and make good on its commitments.
My fellow citizens, our military commanders and I have carefully weighed the options. We discussed every possible approach. In the end, I chose this course of action because it provides the best chance of success. Many in this chamber

understand that America must not fail in Iraq – because you understand that the consequences of failure would be grievous and far reaching.
If American forces step back before Baghdad is secure, the Iraqi government would be overrun by extremists on all sides. We could expect an epic battle between Shia extremists backed by Iran, and Sunni extremists aided by al Qaeda and supporters of the old regime. A contagion of violence could spill out across the country – and in time the entire region could be drawn into the conflict. For America, this is a nightmare scenario. For the enemy, this is the objective. Chaos is their greatest ally in this struggle. And out of chaos in Iraq, would emerge an emboldened enemy with new safe havens... new recruits ... new resources ... and an even greater determination to harm America. To allow this to happen would be to ignore the lessons of September 11th and invite tragedy. And ladies and gentlemen, nothing is more important at this moment in our history than for America to succeed in the Middle East ... to succeed in Iraq ... and to spare the American people from this danger. This is where matters stand tonight, in the here and now. I have spoken with many of you in person. I respect you and the arguments you have made. We went into this largely united – in our assumptions, and in our convictions. And whatever you voted for, you did not vote for failure. Our country is pursuing a new strategy in Iraq – and I ask you to give it a chance to work. And I ask you to support our troops in the field – and those on their way.
The war on terror we fight today is a generational struggle that will continue long after you and I have turned our duties over to others. That is why it is important to work together so our Nation can see this great effort through. Both parties and both branches should work in close consultation. And this is why I propose to establish a special advisory council on the war on terror, made up of leaders in Congress from both political parties. We will share ideas for how to position America to meet every challenge that confronts us. And we will show our enemies abroad that we are united in the goal of victory.
One of the first steps we can take together is to add to the ranks of our military – so that the American Armed Forces are ready for all the challenges ahead. Tonight I ask the Congress to authorize an increase in the size of our active Army and Marine Corps by 92,000 in the next five years. A second task we can take on together is to design and establish a volunteer Civilian Reserve Corps. Such a corps would function much like our military reserve. It would ease the burden on the Armed Forces by allowing us to hire civilians with critical skills to serve on missions abroad when America needs them. And it would give people across America who do[es] not wear the uniform a chance to serve in the defining struggle of our time.
Americans can have confidence in the outcome of this struggle – because we are not in this struggle alone. We have a diplomatic strategy that is rallying the world to join in the fight against extremism. In Iraq, multinational forces are operating under a mandate from the United Nations – and we are working with Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Gulf States to increase support for Iraq's government. The United Nations has imposed sanctions on Iran, and made it clear that the world will not allow the regime in Tehran to acquire nuclear weapons. With the other members of the Quartet – the UN, the European Union, and Russia – we are pursuing diplomacy to help bring peace to the Holy Land, and pursuing the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state living side-by-side with Israel in peace and security. In Afghanistan, NATO has taken the lead in turning back the Taliban and al Qaeda offensive – the first time the Alliance has deployed forces outside the North Atlantic area. Together with our partners in China, Japan, Russia, and South Korea, we are pursuing intensive diplomacy to achieve a Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons. And we will continue to speak out for the cause of freedom in places like Cuba, Belarus, and Burma – and continue to awaken the conscience of the world to save the people of Darfur.
American foreign policy is more than a matter of war and diplomacy. Our work in the world is also based on a timeless truth: To whom much is given, much is required. We hear the call to take on the challenges of hunger, poverty, and disease – and that is precisely what America is doing. We must continue to fight HIV/AIDS, especially on the continent of Africa – and because you funded our Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the number of people receiving life-saving drugs has grown from 50,000 to more than 800,000 in three short years. I ask you to continue funding our efforts to fight HIV/AIDS. I ask you to provide $1.2 billion over

five years so we can combat malaria in 15 African countries. I ask that you fund the Millennium Challenge Account, so that American aid reaches the people who need it, in nations where democracy is on the rise and corruption is in retreat. And let us continue to support the expanded trade and debt relief that are the best hope for lifting lives and eliminating poverty.
When America serves others in this way, we show the strength and generosity of our country. These deeds reflect the character of our people. The greatest strength we have is the heroic kindness, courage, and self sacrifice of the American people. You see this spirit often if you know where to look – and tonight we need only look above to the gallery.
Dikembe Mutombo grew up in Africa, amid great poverty and disease. He came to Georgetown University on a scholarship to study medicine – but Coach John Thompson got a look at Dikembe and had a different idea. Dikembe became a star in the NBA, and a citizen of the United States. But he never forgot the land of his birth – or the duty to share his blessings with others. He has built a brand new hospital in his hometown. A friend has said of this good hearted man: "Mutombo believes that God has given him this opportunity to do great things." And we are proud to call this son of the Congo our fellow American.
After her daughter was born, Julie Aigner-Clark searched for ways to share her love of music and art with her child. So she borrowed some equipment, and began filming children's videos in her basement. The Baby Einstein Company was born – and in just five years her business grew to more than $20 million in sales. In November 2001, Julie sold Baby Einstein to the Walt Disney Company, and with her help Baby Einstein has grown into a $200 million business. Julie represents the great enterprising spirit of America. And she is using her success to help others – producing child safety videos with John Walsh of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Julie says of her new project: "I believe it's the most important thing that I've ever done. I believe that children have the right to live in a world that is safe." We are pleased to welcome this talented business entrepreneur and generous social entrepreneur – Julie Aigner-Clark.
Three weeks ago, Wesley Autrey was waiting at a Harlem subway station with his two little girls, when he saw a man fall into the path of a train. With seconds to act, Wesley jumped onto the tracks ... pulled the man into a space between the rails ... and held him as the train passed right above their heads. He insists he's not a hero. Wesley says: "We got guys and girls overseas dying for us to have our freedoms. We got to show each other some love." There is something wonderful about a country that produces a brave and humble man like Wesley Autrey.
Tommy Rieman was a teenager pumping gas in Independence, Kentucky, when he enlisted in the United States Army. In December 2003, he was on a reconnaissance mission in Iraq when his team came under heavy enemy fire. From his Humvee, Sergeant Rieman returned fire – and used his body as a shield to protect his gunner. He was shot in the chest and arm, and received shrapnel wounds to his legs – yet he refused medical attention, and stayed in the fight. He helped to repel a second attack, firing grenades at the enemy's position. For his exceptional courage, Sergeant Rieman was awarded the Silver Star. And like so many other Americans who have volunteered to defend us, he has earned the respect and gratitude of our whole country.
In such courage and compassion, ladies and gentlemen, we see the spirit and character of America – and these qualities are not in short supply. This is a decent and honorable country – and resilient, too. We have been through a lot together. We have met challenges and faced dangers, and we know that more lie ahead. Yet we can go forward with confidence – because the State of our Union is strong ... our cause in the world is right ... and tonight that cause goes on. God bless. See you next year. Thank you for your prayers.

[166] Fatah accuses Hamas of corruption, 23.01.2007:
Ramallah – Ma'an – Spokesman for the Fatah movement, Jamal Nazzal, has revealed some documents in which he accused the government of corruption. The report which he prepared said "according to official documents and correspondents, the Hamas government continues the appointments and promotions of employees, which puts more pressure on the budget, especially after thousands of contracts

were signed for employing members of Hamas in the different posts in the government."
The report which Ma'an also has a copy of, said the correspondent of the ministry of the interior since the 21st of November 2006 "revealed that he was calling for the employment of nine persons with school graduate qualifications only, as managers, and in another letter he asked for the employment of nine others in the degrees [levels of employment] of two and five."
The statement spoke about other appointments, which were against the law and mentioned the names and posts of many people that were assigned in an illegal way. The statement named 17 individuals, which it said were appointed in advanced positions despite not being qualified for such positions.
Nazzal said that the Fatah movement informed the president about these breaches of the law, in addition to the prime minister and the finance minister. He condemned the appointments and said that the government ignored the proper procedures in the appointments of the employees in government departments.
The Hamas movement condemned the accusations of Fatah, the spokesman for the movement of Hamas, Fawzi Barhoum, told Ma'an, "Up to this moment we did not hear any part of Fatah standing with the government, they only accuse it in every thing, instead of helping it to build the county," he also said that "this is not the right time, this is the time for the fighters not the defamers."
Vgl. den Kommentar von Amira Hass „Wie die Hamas lernt, sich anzupassen" in der Rubik „Bestandsaufnahmen und Perspektiven" dieser Homepage.

[167] Middle East Times. Review of Arab Editorials, 23.01.2007:
Lebanon poised at edge of political abyss
Lebanon's *Daily Star* warned in an editorial Tuesday that the Lebanese were poised at the edge of the "abyss of uncertainty created by the failings of their political leaders" as the opposition escalated its protest by imposing a general strike.
The independent English-language daily blamed the government and its parliamentary majority allies, as well as the Hezbollah-led opposition, for failing to make a strong enough case for an accord to avert a confrontation.
The newspaper said that while all political groups had the right to present their views, their arguments should "include more than [mere] criticism of the other side, and [achieving their] goals must take into account the welfare of the state in which [they] exist." The paper added that any such expectations had been dashed, with neither side taking into consideration the "socio-economic crisis unfolding ... as they engage in a fierce but futile debate about differences that surely exist but are steadfastly ignored."
On a related note, the English-language daily also argued that while every political party had the right to protest, the current conditions in Lebanon were too fragile to handle the resulting pressures. "If both sides miscalculate and end up destroying the very country they claim to love, where will that leave civilians who just want to feed their families?" queried *The Daily Star.*
Lebanon strike to fail, ignite 'sensitivities'
Another Lebanese daily, *As Safir [The Embassador],* predicted Tuesday's opposition strike would make for a difficult day, given the likely failure to achieve economic reform or a change to Prime Minister Fuad Siniora's government.
The independent mass-circulation daily also pointed out that while the strike was a temporary measure, it was ill-timed, taking place two days before an international donor conference for Lebanon's reconstruction was due to be held in Paris.
As Safir argued that economic conditions were not the true reason for holding the strike, saying that if they were, the Siniora government and its allies would have been more justified in taking to the streets and sealing off roads.
The daily also stressed the strike would only serve to further inflame "historic sensitivities" and promote extremism. According to the independent newspaper, the worst thing about the strike was that those who had called for it knew it would be interpreted as a provocation, but were nonetheless bent on carrying it out as a political option.
Strike to rend Lebanon for Syria, Iran's benefit
An editorial in Jordan's *Al Ghad [The Morning]* accused the Lebanese opposition of paralyzing its country, saying it was merely consolidating Lebanon's position as a political bargaining chip for regional forces. The independent daily said it was now

evident that the Lebanese opposition, "affiliated with Syria and loyal to Iran," had chosen the interests of the latter two countries above its own. "The Iranian and Syrian regimes are the only winners in the Lebanese crisis," it opined, "and all Lebanese will lose if the political escalation explodes into political and sectarian fighting."
Al Ghad also predicted that Tuesday's general strike would have unsurprising results, with supporters of the Hezbollah-led opposition participating in the picketing, while government supporters refrained from doing so.
The mass-circulation paper added the strike would reveal national divisions, bringing sectarian tension to a head, with violence likely between the sides. *Al Ghad* also insisted that through the threat to the country's stability posed by the Lebanese opposition and its regional allies, Iran and Syria were sending a message to the international community and to the Lebanese people, respectively.
The newspaper urged Arabs not to stand by as passive observers, arguing it was time to take a firm stance on Lebanon. "Neutrality is no longer acceptable because it means running away from responsibility," it added.
Conference promotes greater intra-Islamic dialogue
In an editorial covering this week's Doha conference for dialogue among Islamic sects, Qatar's *Al Rayah [The Flag]* reported that delegates had unanimously condemned Shiite and Sunni sectarian strife as a threat to Iraq's unity. The pro-government daily added the scholar-attendees also agreed that such conflict was a form of sedition "foreign" to Iraqis and Muslims, and an attempt to shift attention away from the "real enemy entrenched in the midst of the Islamic and Arab nation."
The newspaper said the conference, which included prominent scholars and thinkers from different Arab and Muslim nations, offered a good opportunity to study the status of Muslims worldwide. The summit had thus prompted delegates to further their efforts toward promoting greater understanding among Islamic sects, and removing divisions between them, added *Al Rayah.* "This conference constituted a good start for intra-Islamic dialogue among the different sects, managing to break through the barrier of distrust," it said.
The newspaper urged Arab and Muslim countries to consolidate the conference attendees' efforts toward greater Islamic unity, adopting dialogue as the basic answer to the current crises sweeping across the Muslim world.
Iran should foster peace not inflame sectarianism
The London-based *Asharq Al Awsat* said in a commentary that the Middle East did not need more conflict to add to Sunni-Shiite sedition. The Saudi-owned daily said that while the forces of sedition had earlier lain dormant, they could now revive in Iraq and Lebanon, as well as in other of the region's key areas where the stage was set for fanatics to trigger off conflict.
The daily said that while the West was tolerant of different religions and sects, the Middle East's psychological atmosphere was colored by the region's primarily Sunni and Shiite populations.
The paper, distributed in many Arab countries, argued that Iran, as the central Shiite influence in the region, bore great responsibility for either igniting or quenching sectarian strife. "It is wrong for Iran to keep its focus on Iraq and Lebanon [solely] within [the confines of] this sectarian vision when [instead] it could play a role as a regional power supporting stability and tolerance," it said. It was also wrong for Iran to try to promote the Shiite sect in Sunni society, stressed *Asharq Al Awsat ["The Middle East"],* because doing so only produced more hatred and animosity.
The newspaper's editorial warned that if Iran squandered former president Mohammad Khatami's achievements in fostering Tehran's relations with its Arab neighbors, it would be an even greater mistake. The daily called on Sunni and Shiite pundits to intervene to defuse the sectarian tension before the entire region was enmeshed in a fierce and destabilizing struggle.

[168] The 7th Herzliya Conference: Summaries of the Lecture by Prof. Bernard Lewis, Princeton University:
I will use this platform as an opportunity to situate the events of this region in a wider picture. The collapse of the USSR meant more than the end of the Cold War, but the end of an era in the Middle East. This is the end of the 200 years era which began when Napoleon came to Egypt. The only opportunities to the Middle East

rulers were to play one power against the other. We saw it in World War II and during the Cold War.
The end of the Cold War was a change of cosmic dimension in the region. It took some years for the leaders of the region to adjust. Some still continued to play for a few years the same game of the Cold War.
Now the outside powers are not as interested in the Middle East as they were before. This means going back to older patterns. The primary identity of the Middle East countries is religious, not national or ethnic. It is always the Muslims against the rest. The task is to bring Islam to all the rest of mankind. This is the Muslims duty. Christianity "plays" the same competitive game.
There is an ongoing battle between the two religions. In the seventh century the Muslims did well and conquered part of France and Spain. The second successful attempt was made by the Ottoman empire. What we see today is the third attempt, with aspirations that this is the "third lucky" time. We see in Muslim writings that the struggle has already begun.
There are competing leaders to take this fight ahead. The Sunni Wahabbi cause represented by bin-Laden. Another is the Shiite version which began with the first Iranian revolution, and the second Iranian revolution occurring now.
The second major change of the end of the Bonaparte phase – is increased internal conflict in the area. This has sometimes appeared as a rivalry inside the Arab world. Now it is between the Sunni and Shiite (between "Protestants" and "Catholics").
The difference between them is an important one. The word revolution is very important in the region. The Iranian revolution was a genuine one like the French one. It resonated far outside the country – East and West, and is still resonating. This is a major threat to the Middle East Sunni countries.
[Egypt's President Anwar] Saadat made peace with Israel due to rational calculations. In the recent Lebanon war Israel was cheered by moderate Sunni states, who were disappointed that Israel could not win over the Shiite branch. There are some who are willing to put aside their conflict with Israel in order to deal with the more immediate and intimate danger.
One more aspect of the second phase of the Iranian revolution: [Iran's President Machmud] Ahmedinejad truly believes in the apocalyptic message he is bringing. This makes him very dangerous. The "Mutual Assured Destruction" is not a deterrent, but an inducement to him.

[169] Mash'al, Abbas agree to continue national dialogue for two weeks Date: 22. 01.2007:
Damascus – Ma'an – Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and the chairman of Hamas' political bureau of Hamas, Khalid Mash'al, concluded their meeting on Sunday night with a statement affirming the importance of continuing dialogue with the intention of forming a national unity government.
After the meeting, a joint press conference was held during which Ziad Abu 'Amro, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, read out their statement which stressed the following four points:
1. Internal Palestinian fighting is rejected and prohibited, and all incitement must cease.
2. Dialogue and the efforts to form a national unity government will continue for two weeks. A national dialogue committee will be formed in Gaza to support the dialogue.
3. Steps will be taken over the coming month to activate the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).
4. Upholding the Palestinian national constants and refusing temporary solutions will be emphasised.
President Mahmoud Abbas assured in the press conference that their meetings dealt with the concerns and interests of the Palestinian people. He affirmed that it had been agreed to consider the spilling of Palestinian blood as entirely prohibited, and to work on eliminating the frictions and clashes. He also denounced all acts of incitement which he accused of causing strife.
President Abbas added, "We discussed topics related to the national unity government, and we hope to continue the dialogue on this subject; [...] this dialogue will continue in the Gaza Strip."

President Abbas pointed out that amongst the issues that were agreed upon was to activate and rebuild the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) over the next month. He also stressed the importance of adhering to the national constants and rejecting the idea of a Palestinian state with temporary borders.
For his part, Khalid Mesha'al, the head of Hamas' political bureau, assured that the language of dialogue is the only language allowed to address political differences. He added that there is no power struggle. He also stressed that the spilling of Palestinian blood is prohibited and only dialogue can avoid anything that might lead to conflict and dispute.
Mash'al assured the rejection of any projects that contradict with the Palestinian national rights. He also concurred that the two leaders stressed during the meeting that all projects calling for a Palestinian state with temporary borders is totally rejected.
Mash'al pointed out that there are still controversial points to be discussed. He said, "We will continue [discussions] until the establishment of a government of national unity on the basis we agree upon."
The press conference between Abbas and Mash'al came after two consecutive meetings. The first brought together delegations from the two movements, headed by Abbas and Mash'al, and lasted 45 minutes, and the second was a private meeting between the two leaders.

[170] Vgl. die Eintragung am 23.12.2006 in dieser Chronologie.

[171] Akiva Eldar: Abdullah: Jordan will develop nuclear power, in “Haaretz”-online 19.01.2007:
Jordan aspires to develop nuclear power for peaceful purposes and believes that unless all sides move quickly toward a peace settlement in the region, the recent confrontation in Lebanon is only a hint of disasters to come. In an exclusive interview with Haaretz on Thursday, King Abdullah II of Jordan spoke with Akiva Eldar:
"I can say that on behalf of the U.S. president and the secretary of state, and I've talked to both, that they're very serious and very committed to moving the peace process forward, because they realize the dynamics of the region at the moment.
"And this is the opportunity to reach out to the Palestinians and the Israelis and say, look, this is the golden chance and to an extent, maybe the last possibility. We had a conflict this summer.
"The frequency of conflict in this region is extremely alarming, and the perception, I believe, among Arabs, and partly among Israelis, is that in the summer Israel lost this round... And that creates a very difficult and a very dangerous precedence for radical thinking in the area. The stakes are getting higher and higher.
"So this is an opportunity to reach out to each other and make sure that the crisis of this summer doesn't happen again. If we don't move the peace process forward, it's only a matter of time until there is a conflict between Israel and somebody else in the region. And I think it's coming sooner rather than later.
"We all need to work together, because solving the Israeli-Palestinian problem allows us to tackle the other issues around us. All of us are looking at Iraq with concern, we don't know what's going to happen in Lebanon, although we hope that they're moving in the right direction... Whether people like it or not, the linchpin is always the Israeli-Palestinian problem."
Do you see a clear link between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Iranian nuclear threat and the threat of terrorism?
"Through Hamas, Iran has been able to buy itself a seat on the table in talking about the Palestinian issue. And, as a result, through Hamas it does play a role in the issue of the Palestinians, as strange as that should sound. If we start moving the process forward, then there's less reason for engagement on the Palestinian issue. "But, the rules have changed on the nuclear subject throughout the whole region. Where I think Jordan was saying, 'we'd like to have a nuclear-free zone in the area,' after this summer, everybody's going for nuclear programs. The Egyptians are looking for a nuclear program. The GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] are looking at one, and we are actually looking at nuclear power for peaceful and energy purposes. We've been discussing it with the West. I personally believe that any country that has a nuclear program should conform to international regulations

and should have international regulatory bodies that check to make sure that any nuclear program moves in the right direction."
In other words, you're saying that you expect Israel to join the NPT.
"What's expected from us should be a standard across the board. We want to make sure this is used for energy. What we don't want is an arms race to come out of this. As we become part of an international body and its international regulations are accepted by all of us, then we become a united front."
Would you first deal with the Palestinian track and then move on to the Syrian-Lebanese track?
"Syria seems to be of tremendous interest in the Israeli public opinion, but I think that the priority, if you want to get the guarantees that Israel wants for a stable future, the core issue takes the priority. We have to launch the Palestinian process and then hope that things will go easier with the other players. You have to start with the Palestinian first and look at the other ones as a close second. I would hedge my bets on how successful the other tracks would be if the Palestinian one is not solved. And, we don't know how much of a smokescreen the other tracks would be and if we don't get the right nuances for what we need on the ground for the next year, then the future for us looks extremely dismal, for all of us in the region, if we don't move the process along. What happened this summer is just a taste of a lot of worse things to come if we don't change the direction of this discord. We're all on the same boat. The security and the future of Jordan is hand-in-hand with the future of the Palestinians and the Israelis. ... So, a failure for us is a failure for you, and vice versa."
How do you think the Americans should further the process?
"You have the Road Map, you have Taba [January 2001], you have the Geneva Accords. So, we don't have to go back to the drawing board. Most of us know the facts and the issues extremely well. My only issue about the road map is that circumstances have changed since the road map was launched, and the sort of long drawn out phase approach, I don't think works anymore. So, we're looking at combining phases, I think, to move people as quickly as possible. The silent majority can be easily intimidated or swayed. And, I promise you, if tomorrow, [Prime Minister Ehud] Olmert and President [Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud] Abbas sit down and shake hands and launch a peace process, there'll be extremists on either side that create violence and loss of life to try and destabilize the conflict. That is a given. We have to be stronger than that to be able to move the process forward."
Would you suggest we go back to Yitzhak Rabin's formula: to pursue the peace process as if there were no terrorism, and to fight terrorism as if there were no peace process?
"I personally believe that my father's last biggest disappointment and sadness to him was that he lost a partner for peace. And, he believed that if PM Rabin hadn't been assassinated, we wouldn't be talking about a peace process today. In the last years of His Majesty's life, I saw him looking at the Middle East and realizing that there wasn't somebody with the courage to be able to take the process forward. It is our responsibility to move it forward. His late Majesty, when he started discussions with prime minister Rabin, they both looked at it the same way, I mean these were two statesmen that looked at it from an emotional point of view, in that 'who is my partner on the other side? What are his fears and his insecurities?' If I could put myself in his shoes then I could understand what to negotiate ... it was a unique relationship between His Majesty and Rabin. When it came to the Arab-Israeli Peace Initiative, we tried to do the same thing. An agreed solution on the issue of refugees. Why do we want a two-state solution? We want a two-state solution because we envisage the future of Israel not just having borders with Jordan, Syria or Egypt. The future of Israelis, if I was to put myself in your shoes, is to be welcomed from Morocco on the Atlantic to Oman on the Indian Ocean. I think that is the prize for the Israelis. But that comes at a price and that is the future of the Palestinians. So although we're talking politics, I think that we have a physical problem and we're running out of time, maybe the wall, maybe the settlements, the lack of hope for the Palestinians will bring us to a point in time in the near future where a two-state solution is no longer anything concrete to talk about, then what happens? If we don't solve the Israeli-Palestinian issue, then we may never be able to solve the Arab-Israeli issue. Is this what we want to give our children? Do they

have to be brought up like we were brought up ... in conflict or do we want to give them hope?"
If you were Israel's prime minister, would you settle for a hudna?
"I mean, you talk about the hudna. Tell me what you mean about hudna. If you and I have a problem and we want to go to the endgame, then we say, let's hold off with each other so we can have an atmosphere to sit down and talk. If it's a hudna, you do your thing and I do my thing for x-amount of years and then we'll decide what happens. No, that doesn't solve the problem. In my vocabulary, a hudna is a truce that allows people to sit around the table to solve the problem, which I believe is a two-state solution, then I support that type of hudna.
But a hudna to say you mind your business and I'll mind mine for an indefinite period of time really doesn't get us anywhere, does it?
But in our case, Hamas insists on its refusal to recognize even our right to exists. So, what kind of solution can we talk to Hamas about? But, if you've noticed, and I'm not agreeing with either side, but even the language recently coming from Hamas, even from the Damascus bureau, is quite interesting. Palestinians are suffering terribly, and I have major concerns. I hear from Israeli politicians that we don't have a partner for peace. But the clock is ticking and we're running out of opportunity. Palestinians tend to ask, where is the Arab street? Where are the Arab leaders? We've always been there to support the Palestinians and a two-state solution, but today, where are the Palestinians for themselves? My concern is that as we're trying to move the process forward, it may be the Palestinians that may lose the future of Palestine if they don't get their act together, if they don't put their differences aside. At the end of the day, a cohesive Palestinian leadership that can negotiate the future of Palestine is what's needed today, and if we don't have that in six months or a year, then there may not be a two-state solution and I fear that the Palestinians may be the ones to lose."
There are Israeli politicians who say that publicly Jordan supports a full-fledged Palestinian state, but off-the-record that it is not very excited about having a Palestinian state right there in the Jordan valley and would rather have Israel on the other side of its border. What would you say to them?
"I do not know anybody, any Jordanian, who would say that there is a shred of common sense to that. The true future of our little area is going to be Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian, and it has to be separate entities. There are also Israelis who want to push the problem to Jordan. An independent Palestinian state allows us a different future of how we move economically, socially and even politically. Jordan never gave up playing a constructive role in the holy city of Jerusalem.
Do you see a Jordanian role in Jerusalem as part of a final status solution?
"I look at Jerusalem as being a beacon for the three monotheistic religions. Now, where Jordan plays a role is obviously from a Muslim point of view, we, as Hashemites, have a historical role in Jerusalem, but also all the Christian churches are credited to us. So, there is obviously a role for Jordan in finding a solution to Jerusalem that is acceptable to all of us. Jordan will be a very positive element in that."
You're in a very special position, because Jordan is caught right in the middle of two conflicts: Iraq and Palestine. Is the solution for Iraq sending more troops?
"Iraq is a challenge that is as important to Jordan as it is to Israel, as it is to Egypt, as it is to any other country – and to the U.S. All we can say about Iraq is that the president has listened to the Maliki government. He's come up with a statement saying, I'm going to benchmark you, but you need to make some major changes."
Next month marks eight years since your coronation. You haven't visited us yet. When are you coming to Israel?
"We're hoping that in the near future, and that could be weeks or maybe in a month or two, there'll be an opportunity to re-launch our final chance for a future for all of us in the region. And, if we're successful in doing that, then this will allow me to come and visit, and to try and bring the parties closer and closer together. I'm quite willing to explain the Arab proposal to the Israeli people and to create an internal dialogue about this issue. The Arabs are coming to say we want peace, and we want formal relations. And, as a human being, I can't understand how anybody would not want that. We look at the neighborhood and we're all concerned. But, the people who need to be equally concerned are the Israelis and sometimes, they see the conflict happening in the Middle East and think well, that's not our problem. But

unfortunately, everything that happens in the Middle East is interlinked. And so, this is a challenge we all face."

[172] Miller ist heute am “Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars” in Washington, D.C, tätig. Zu seiner Tätigkeit als Nahost-Berater Clintons s. Reiner Bernstein: Von Gaza nach Genf. Die Genfer Friedensinitiative von Israelis und Palästinensern. Schwalbach/Ts. 2006,S. 20 passim.

[173] Vgl. die Eintragung am 26.12.2006 in dieser Chronologie.

[174] Vgl. die Eintragung am 20.12.2006 in dieser Chronologie.

[175] EXCLUSIVE: Full text of document drafted during secret talks, August 29, 2004, in “Haaretz”-online 16.01.2007:

Preamble

The objective of this effort is to establish normal, peaceful relations between the governments and peoples of Israel and Syria, and to sign a treaty of peace attesting to this achievement. The treaty will resolve the four "pillars" at the core of negotiations: security, water, normalization, and borders. There is be no agreement on any single one of these issues unless and until all of these issues are resolved.

I. Sovereignty

1. Syrian sovereignty, based upon the June 4, 1967 line in the Golan Heights, is acknowledged by Israel. The mutually agreed upon border will be determined by both parties (and guaranteed by the U.S. and the UN)

II. Framework Agreement, Implementation, and the End to the State of Belligerency

A "Framework Agreement" will address the issues of security (including early warning), water, normalization, and borders. Negotiations to reach such an agreement should proceed as expeditiously.

1. The state of belligerency between the parties will cease upon signature of a framework agreement between the parties, and will include the cessation of hostile actions by each party against the other.
2. Application of Syrian sovereignty in the Golan Heights, the establishment of normal, bilateral diplomatic relations, and the implementation of relevant provisions related to water and security will commence as soon as possible after the conclusion of a Framework Agreement but no later than the signing of a treaty of peace.
3. Implementation of the Israeli withdrawal to the mutually agreed border will occur during a period (the exact time frame to be mutually agreed) from signature of the Framework Agreement.

III. Peace Treaty

1. Satisfactory implementation of provisions and obligations established in the Framework Agreement will result in the signing of a peace treaty between the parties.

IV. Security

1. Demilitarized zones will be established in the areas of the Golan Heights that Israeli forces will vacate.
2. No military forces, armaments, weapons systems, or military infrastructure will be introduced into the demilitarized zones. Only a limited civil police presence will be deployed in the areas.
3. Both parties agree not to fly over demilitarized zones without a special arrangement.
4. The establishment of an early warning system includes a ground station on Mt. Hermon/Jabal as-Sheikh operated by the United States.
5. A monitoring and inspection and verification mechanism will be established to monitor and supervise the security agreements.
6. Direct liaison between the parties will be established in order to: Create a direct, real time communication capability on security issues in order to minimize friction along the international border; Help to prevent errors and misunderstandings between the parties.
7. Zones of reduced military forces will be established in Israel west of the international border with Syria and in Syria east of the Golan Heights. The respective depth of these zones (as measured in kilometers) between Israel and Syria will be according to a ratio of 1:4.

8. The Parties will cooperate in fighting local and international terrorism of all kinds.
9. The Parties will work together for a stable and safe Middle East, including the solution of regional problems related to the Palestinians, Lebanese, and Iran.

V. Water

1. Israel will control the use and disposition of the water in the Upper Jordan River and Lake Tiberias.
2. Syria will not interrupt or obstruct natural flow of water in either quality or quantity in the Upper Jordan River, its tributaries, and Lake Tiberias.
3. Syrian use of the waters of the upper Jordan River, its tributaries, and Lake Tiberias for residential and fishing purposes is recognized and guaranteed.

VI. Park

1. In order to safeguard the water resources of the Jordan River basin, Syrian territory east of the mutually agreed border will be designated as a Park open to all and administered by Syria. The Park is to be established in the Golan Heights upon completion of the Israeli withdrawal and application of Syrian sovereignty in accordance with the treaty of peace. The park will extend from the agreed upon border eastward to a line to be determined by mutual agreement.
2. Park characteristics:
   * Park is open for tourism.
   * Park will be policed by Syrian park service personnel.
   * The park will be free of permanent residents except for conservation and law enforcement personnel.
   * No visa will be required for entry into park [from Israeli territory].
   * Syrians will issue onsite official entry permit for a nominal fee.
   * Visitors wishing to enter other Syrian territory east of the Park must have a proper visa and transit Syrian controls on park's eastern perimeter.
   * Entry to park is valid for one day during daylight hours.

[176] Dan Halutz's full letter of resignation as it was presented to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, in “Ynet” [“Yediot Achronot”] 12.01.07:

Dear Sir,

I have recently fulfilled 40 years of service in the IDF. During this long period, I have had the privilege of serving this country, my country, my homeland. In my eyes, this is the loftiest mission – to defend the peace and security of the State of Israel.

I fought with my brothers in arms in the ranks of the IDF in all the arenas. Every time I was called up for an assignment, I fulfilled it with a sense of mission. I acted out of considerations in accordance with morality, loyalty, integrity, authenticity, and affection.

During my long stay with the IDF, I had the privilege to command excellent people, and I saw the IDF advance and develop, because of these same people, capabilities and achievements that have placed it among the leading armies of the world.

For me, the word 'responsibility' has a weighty meaning: It is the essence of everything, from A to B. From confidence to investigation. My conception of responsibility is what led me to remain in my post until now, and to lay this letter on the desk today.

The day I won the confidence of the government headed by Mr. Ariel Sharon upon receiving the post of chief of staff on June 1, 2005, I took upon myself a great responsibility.

The essence of this responsibility was expressed in the fighting in Lebanon in the summer of 2006 and after it. When the battle was over, I decided to exercise my responsibilities to the fullest according to the best of the traditions from home and my army service. Accordingly, I ordered a full investigation of the fighting in a manner that is unmatched in the history of the IDF: a profound, deep, and detailed investigation, that didn't pass over me.

Today, after the investigative process has been completed in the IDF, and after a draft has been set for applying the lessons of the investigation in the framework of the IDF's 2007 working plan, I feel a sense of pride for having completed what I set as a goal for myself at the end of the war in Lebanon, and I exhausted my responsibility. After these deep processes, I trust that the IDF will be prepared for the challenges that lay ahead.

The investigations made me see what needed to be done in order to correct what needed correcting and to maintain and improve the areas in which we succeeded. One of the central things were learned from the investigations is that the IDF system is deeply affected by long-term processes. Often, this influence is not detected, and we are not aware of the extent of its consequences. These processes have implications for the Israeli society, in general, and overall military capabilities, in particular.
The State of Israel has, unfortunately, been sentenced to continue fighting for its existence. The capability to ensure our success in this continuing battle starts and ends with our power. This power, at its foundation, is built on values, on quality education, on a strong economy, and, above all, a strong IDF.
The IDF's power is built first and foremost on the quality of its members, and only afterwards on the resources allotted it to fulfill its missions. We must remember that the IDF's achievements in the war in Lebanon, and in other arenas, was achieved by a large group of fighters and commanders in compulsory service and reserve service who are prepared to be called to the flag at any moment. The IDF's resilience stems from the public support it enjoys. Unfortunately, this last area of support has eroded in recent years.
I believe, Mr. Prime Minister, that we must protect at any cost the respect and heritage of the IDF, and to leave it outside the political battles.
It is human nature not to want to serve in a system that isn't valued and which isn't protected by its dispatchers. We must ensure that we don't arrive at a situation in which quality people hesitate to tie their fate and future to the IDF. Nothing will help us then, not the good education, and not the strong economy. There is danger that the threats on the State of Israel will become more tangible.
The IDF is a very moral army, such as there is none other like it. Its heritage is replete with pages of bravery stained with the blood of the sons and daughters of the country who have fallen along the way. Their memories will accompany us always.
I hope that we will be able to return the kidnapped, captive, and missing soldiers quickly to the country for which we are fighting. The meetings with the bereaved families will be in my heart forever. Even during these difficult and complex times for them, they continue to support and encourage the IDF and its commanders.
I am forever ingratiated to the defense minister under whom I served, and thank the IDF General Staff who were full partners in thought and in practice. I give special thanks to the commanders and soldiers of the IDF compulsory and reserve service, and to all the employees of the IDF who carry the daily burdens.
You, sir, I wish to thank for your support and backup, and to wish you success in handling the complex challenges facing the nation, and you as prime minister.
In order to guide and to lead, we must take responsibility. As such, after I have finished my task for this era, here I announce to you that I intend to immediate terminate my post as chief of staff.
I salute the IDF and its fighters.
And stand at your service always, In blessing,
Danny Halutz, Lieutenant General, Chief of Staff

[177] Yosef (Tommy) Lapid. Stop the Jewish barbarians in Hebron, in “Jerusalem Post”-online 17.01.207:
That woman, the one who it turns out is named Yifat Alkobi, the Jewish woman that confronted, cursed, spat on and threatened her Arab neighbor in Hebron, she who is imprisoned in her own home, seemed somehow familiar to me.
Gradually, from the cobwebs of my childhood memories, I dredged up the image of a Hungarian neighbor in Novi Sad, who used to stand at the entrance to her home and curse us every time we went into the street – just like Yifat Alkobi.
When we decide, and rightly so, to never under any circumstances compare the behavior of Jews to that of Nazis, we are forgetting that anti-Semitism only reached its height at Auschwitz. It had existed, was active, frightening, harmful and disgusting – exactly like Alkobi's image – in the years that preceded Auschwitz too. And behind shuttered windows hid terrified Jewish women, exactly like the Arab woman of the Abu-Isha family in Hebron.
It is unthinkable that the memory of Auschwitz should serve as a pretext to ignore the fact that living here among us are Jews that behave toward Palestinians exactly

the way that German, Hungarian, Polish and other anti-Semites behaved toward Jews.
I am not referring to crematoria or pogroms, but rather to the persecution, hounding, stone-throwing, undermining of livelihood, scare tactics, spitting and contempt.
It was all of these things that made our lives in the Diaspora so bitter and harrowing, even before they began the wholesale killing of Jews. I was afraid to go to school because little anti-Semites lay in wait on the way and beat us. In what way is a Palestinian child in Hebron any different?
EVEN THOSE that justify the occupation for ideological or religious reasons – or perhaps especially those that seek to justify the occupation – should be ashamed, as Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said of himself, when seeing these pictures. We all bear responsibility for the suffering of the Palestinians, but it would not have been possible to establish a Jewish state without causing them some harm.
But there is no reason or justification for the thuggery of the kind demonstrated time after time by the residents of the Jewish settlement in Hebron toward their Arab neighbors.
The settlement of Jews in Hebron is the original sin. Now, they are adding insult to injury. And at best, we, the Jewish citizens of the State of Israel say, "Tsk, tsk, tsk." We forget that this hounding of the Palestinian neighbors in Hebron happens not only at the moment we see it on television, but rather day after day, every day of the year (with the exception of Yom Kippur). The truth is that I too only pipe up occasionally and pay lip service by means of articles such as this. Even worse: I reacted with silence to this when I was justice minister too. We left the task of protest to the extreme leftist groups, who provoke well-deserved loathing from us all other days of the year.
We are familiar with the excuse of "We didn't know." So, for the record: We do know.
We will never be able to forgive ourselves – our consciences won't let us – and neither will our children if we do not make our army and police put an end to the Jewish barbarism in Hebron.

178 a) Transcript: President Mahmud Abbas and Secretary Condoleezza Rice, Ramallah, January 14, 2007:
PRESIDENT ABBAS: (Via interpreter) In the name of Allah the Most Merciful, the Compassionate, I am happy to welcome Dr. Rice in our country once again here in Ramallah today, and I thank her always for all of the efforts exerted to make peace in this country possible and achievable. We have discussed today with Dr. Rice several topics, on top of which lies the peace process, and that it is indeed to provide the appropriate circumstances and conditions to revive the peace process so that it has a meaning and leads to ending the Israeli occupation that commenced in 1967, as stated in the roadmap and achieving President Bush's vision by establishing an independent, contiguous, viable Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital living side by side with Israel in security and stability.
In order to give the political process the opportunity it deserves and to regain its credibility and the trust of the region's people therein, it is primordial to immediately halt all Israeli colonial activities in the Palestinian territories, stop the separation and expansion wall and put an end to the siege and closure in its various forms imposed upon our people and planned. It is also primordial to release our prisoners in the occupation's prisons and stop the policy of incursions as read as collective punishment, the last of which was the incursion into Ramallah and the killing of four innocent Palestinian citizens with tens injured along the damage in property.
We have stressed on the importance of continuing the consensus truce in the Gaza Strip to expand it to the West Bank, considering that including this truce to all the Palestinian territories is a guarantee for maintaining it. And along that truce and because we are committed to maintaining the truce, I would like to commend the important efforts made by Egypt to ensure the release of Palestinian prisoners and the Israeli soldiers gradually.
We have also noted to Minister Rice our decision to end any temporary or transitional solutions including a state with temporary borders because we do not believe it to be a realistic choice that can be built upon. We have also emphasized the importance of active and continuous mobilization by the various regional and

international parties to put an end to the conflict and its repercussions to achieve a durable and just peace and all of the repercussions of six decades of conflict to achieve a comprehensive, just and a durable peace at all levels and in all tracks so that the region and its people will enjoy peace and stability.
Also we explained to Dr. Rice our efforts to form a national unity government with a program capable of lifting the siege and boosting the peace process through which we will regain control over our occupied land and establish our independent state, regain all of our national legal rights which are recognized by the whole world as our right. And we hope and we endeavor to achieve this as soon as possible so this would lead to a happy end by which the (inaudible) government will be established, otherwise we will go back to the people and we will hold legislative and presidential elections, early elections.
We have also discussed the meeting I had with the Israeli Prime Minister Olmert. It was a good meeting in which we tackled various issues that concern the future of our peoples and peace, and we are waiting for the application of our agreements.
We have also stressed on the importance of the Palestinian national unity and our absolute refusal to solve any disputes regardless of what the nature they are with violence or to reach internal domestic violence. Thus, we will do our utmost to impose the rule of law and restrict carrying arms to the legal security forces who abide by the official policy.
Again, on my behalf and on behalf of the Palestinian people, I welcome you, Dr. Rice, and I hope her efforts will bring fruit.
SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much, Mr. President. Thank you again for welcoming me here to Ramallah to your headquarters here. We've had a very fruitful discussion. We have had a chance to review a number of issues, including some of the questions concerning movement and access. We have had a chance also to review the results of the successful meeting between President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert, and I've pledged that we will do everything that we can to help build on the success of that meeting so that we maintain the momentum that was created by that very important meeting.
I came here to Ramallah as I am going around the Middle East to say to everyone that the United States is deeply committed to finding ways to accelerate progress on the roadmap. The roadmap, after all, is the internationally recognized guide to the establishment of a two-state solution and we should fulfill all of its terms. I am also here to talk about how we can build on the momentum that is currently in Palestinian-Israeli relations to look at the political horizon and to begin to show to the Palestinian people how we might move toward the establishment of a Palestinian state, something that President Bush has clearly set out as an objective of American policy all the way back in 2001.
I want to say to you, Mr. President, as I will say to others, that I have heard loud and clear the call for deeper American engagement in these processes. The United States is absolutely committed to helping to find a solution where Israelis and Palestinians can live in security, in which they can live in peace and in which they can live in democracy. These are our goals and I've heard again the call that America deepen its involvement, and you will have my commitment to do precisely that. President Bush sends his regards as well.
And I want everyone to know, particularly the Palestinian people, how much we admire the leadership of President Abbas as a leader of the Palestinian people. I know of the struggles, Mr. President, to improve the circumstances of daily life for the Palestinian people, particularly in the difficult circumstances now in which there are internal conflicts among the Palestinian people. But I want you to know that our desire is for the Palestinian people to be able to live in unity and in democracy and in peace with a government that can get the respect and the support of the international community. That is something that the Palestinian people deserve. Thank you very much.
QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Dr. Rice, why have you come to Ramallah, especially under circumstances that speak of a state with temporary borders? Or is the visit, like your previous visit, is just for listening? President Mahmoud Abbas talks of access, national dialogue. To what extent have you reached an understanding?

ECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, it's not a bad thing to listen because sometimes you hear what parties need. I just want to say, you know, there have been many

failed attempts to resolve the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis and to make progress, and we need to learn that it is important to listen and to talk and to understand where we're going. And we've made a lot of progress over recent years in particular because of the hard work of President Abbas and we are going to continue to press forward.
I have also heard the President today about how he sees the end state. I've heard how he sees the roadmap and how to get to that end state. And so I think it's not a bad thing to listen. But you're absolutely right, it's also important to act and we'll look for ways to act.
PRESIDENT ABBAS: (Via interpreter) Regarding the efforts to form a government of national unity, you know that we have been exerting tremendous efforts over the past six months to come with a government capable of lifting the siege. When I say capable of lifting the siege, it is known that there are requirements that must be met by this government. We want the world and all of the countries of the world to lift the siege imposed upon us and this government must be in conciliation with the Palestinian legitimacy and with the resolutions of the Arab summit and international legitimacy.
These efforts, as I said, have been halted now. There are new efforts. There are many who want to make efforts on their own. We do not object. The important thing is to achieve results, which is to form a national unity government. I cannot say now that we have achieved the tangible thing because we still – unless we achieve all, we will not be speaking of anything.
QUESTION: Madame Secretary, can you be more specific about exactly what the proposed $85 million U.S. grant for the Palestinian security services would be used for and what guarantees or controls you envision to make sure that that money is not used, for example, to settle old scores?
And for the President, would you prefer that this money go primarily to purchase weapons or to arrange training for the forces, and what guarantees can you offer that the money will not be misused?
SECRETARY RICE: Well, Anne, let me make the point first that the American contribution is a part of an international effort to train and equip the Palestinian forces. It has been foreseen going all the way back to Oslo, certainly in the roadmap, that there would be professional, unified Palestinian security forces that would be trained and equipped, and the expectation was that the international community would take that responsibility. And so this is a part of that effort. General Dayton has been working with his international colleagues to develop a specific plan for that training and equipping of the security forces, and it would be according to that plan. But let me be very clear: It's not as if tomorrow there will be a U.S. contribution should the Congress approve it of X million dollars; rather, this is a train-and-equip program that will unfold over a period of time. I am sure that President Abbas and his people will want to be attentive to the requirements of the plan, including attentive to concerns about human rights which are there in all of our train-and-equip programs around the world.
And so again, let me emphasize it's a part of an international plan, this is not a U.S. plan; and secondly, that it is a classic train-and-equip program that is tailored obviously to the circumstances of the Palestinians, but it will unfold over a period of time according to a plan that General Dayton has worked out.
PRESIDENT ABBAS: (Via interpreter) Regarding the question of arms for Palestinian security forces, I would like to say when we returned to our homeland there was an agreement signed between us and Israelis about the weapons that will be carried by the Palestinian security forces to fulfill their role. However, unfortunately, in a period of time and for many reasons these weapons were destroyed. Additionally, the infrastructure of the security forces was also demolished, and here we ask for weapons. We don't want to purchase weapons – not in a legal or unlegal way. We achieve weapons from our friends upon Israeli agreement and approval. We do not let weapons enter unless it is in a lawful manner. It is the way we started. We deal in total transparency with this issue. We have a need and we said that we needed these weapons and we ask that the security forces be provided with these weapons so that it will be compensated for the losses not only in terms of weapons but also various transportation and communication devices and all of the infrastructure which security forces need in

order to impose security and the rule of law and order on our land. But be confident that we will not misuse any aid that we receive from any party.
QUESTION: Madame Secretary, you met yesterday with Avigdor Lieberman. Can you confirm that he told you that the major military operation in Gaza is only a question of time and that in that case a NATO force would have to be deployed? And also, don't you think you take the risk having a meeting of being seen as supporting or giving credit to his extremist views? And Mr. President, did you receive any support from the Secretary to the national unity government you are trying to form?
SECRETARY RICE: Sylvie, I am obviously not going to discuss what was said in meetings that I've had with members of the Israeli Government, and Mr. Lieberman is a member of the Israeli Government and frankly I'm going to enlist the support of anybody I can to try and move forward a Palestinian state living at peace side by side with Israel. That is the goal here. And I think we really need to stay focused not on issues of what might happen in Gaza if we don't – if the situation there doesn't improve. The President and his team are trying to improve the situation and we're trying to support that. But ultimately, my work is going to be best targeted, I think, in these next months on trying to accelerate progress on the roadmap, which after all would lead us then to a Palestinian state, and to helping the Palestinians and the Israelis think through the political horizon. And that's what I'm focused on, but it's a good thing to hear from as many people as possible.
PRESIDENT ABBAS: (Via interpreter)The position of the United States is known regarding the government of national unity. It is repeated in every occasion whether in the declarations made by persons or from the government of the U.S., also in the Quartet, and I don't think they need that we repeat this position at every occasion. We know it and we understand it very well and we're trying to have good relations with every country in the world.
QUESTION: Dr. Rice, what plans did you come with here as we can see that you are here to listen to both sides, Palestinians and Israelis? Don't you think it's only because of the issue of Iraq and Iran you are here so we can see also here the plan of (inaudible)? And Mr. Olmert promised President Arafat that he will give back the money, he will release the prisoners and nothing happened, so what do you think will go on?
(In Arabic.)
SECRETARY RICE: First of all, I have offered with President Abbas to do what I can to continue to move – help them move forward on what was agreed between the President and Prime Minister Olmert. This is my eighth time in the Middle East as Secretary and my third since September, so obviously the impetus and the impulse to come here comes out of an understanding that we need to make progress here in the Middle East. I remember very well that it was a little over a year ago, actually it was on my birthday – I won't tell you which one – that I was here to negotiate the agreement on movement and access. So I've been very involved with the Palestinians, with the Israelis, since I became Secretary and I expect to try to deepen that involvement. But of course, this conflict, this issue, the establishment of a Palestinian state, should be pursued on its own merits, not because of anything else, not because of Iran, not because of Iraq, not because of anything. The Palestinian people have waited a long time for their own state. The Israeli people have waited a long time to live in security and peace with their neighbors. And if there is anything that I can do and that the President can do to finally realize that day when the Palestinian people – who everybody understands to be an entrepreneurial people, a people who are predisposed toward democracy and tolerance – for the Palestinians to have their own state that they can live in security and peace with Israel and that Israel can therefore have a secure and a democratic neighbor, why wouldn't we want to do that? And it's on its own merits, not because of anything else.
PRESIDENT ABBAS: (Via interpreter) Regarding the first part of your question, Madame Secretary has answered. She has spoken eloquently on that. For the second part, this is preempting events.
SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

b) Report: President Affirms Rejection of Temporary or Transitional Solutions:

RAMALLAH, January 14, 2007 (WAFA)- President Mahmoud Abbas affirmed Sunday his rejection of any temporary or transitional solutions, including a state of temporary borders.
In a joint press conference with U.S. Secretary of State, Dr. Condoleezza Rice in Ramallah, President said that "we have discussed with Rice several topics of which priority is the peace process and the necessity to provide suitable conditions and circumstances to revive it and lead to ending the Israeli Occupation as stated in the Road Map."
President also appreciated President Bush's vision to establishing a viable and continuant Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital living side by side with Israel in security and peace.
"In order to give the political process an opportunity it deserves and to regain credibility and confidence of the peoples in the region, it immediately should hold all colonials activities in the Palestinian Territory, stop the construction of the Annexation and Expansion Wall and putting an end to siege, closure imposed on our people and land, release of prisoners from Israeli jails, stopping Israeli policy of incursions, arrests and collective punishment, the last of which was in Ramallah and the killing of four innocent citizens and injury of tens along the damage of property," President said.
President also affirmed the importance of a continuing a comprehensive truce in the Gaza Strip to expand it to the West Bank and to be included to all the Palestinian Territory as a guarantee to its continuity.
The President emphasised on active and continued mobilisation by regional and international parties to put and end to the conflict to achieve a just, comprehensive and durable peace in all levels and at all tracks, so as the region and its peoples live in peace and stability.
The President spoke also about the efforts made to form a national unity government based on a programme capable of lifting the siege and reviving the peace process to which "we could control over our occupied land, establish our independent state and regain all of our national legitimate rights which are recognised by the entire world," adding "we hope to achieve it as soon as possible and this would lead to a happy end, by which the required government will be established otherwise, we go back to the people and hold Presidential and Legislative elections."
President affirmed on the national unity government and his absolute rejection to solve indifferences through violence.
For her part, Dr. Rice affirmed that the United States is deeply concerned to finding ways to accelerate further in the Road Map that internationally recognised, adding that the "United States is absolutely committed to helping provide a solution for Israelis and Palestinians can live in security, peace and democracy."
"I want to assure you Mr. President , as I assured others that I have heard loud and clear the call for deeper American engagement in these processes and the United States is committed to find a solution where Israelis and Palestinians can live in security."
"These are our goals and we abide by President Bush's vision on a viable Palestinian state," Rice said.
Rice said that "I desire the Palestinian people must be able to live in dignity, democracy and in peace of which a government can be respected and supported by international community that something which the Palestinian people deserve."

[179] Vgl. die Eintragung am 06.12.2006 in dieser Chronologie.

[180] President George W. Bush's address, January 11, 2007: "Good evening. Tonight in Iraq, the Armed Forces of the United States are engaged in a struggle that will determine the direction of the global war on terror and our safety here at home. The new strategy I outline tonight will change America's course in Iraq, and help us succeed in the fight against terror.
"When I addressed you just over a year ago, nearly 12 million Iraqis had cast their ballots for a unified and democratic nation. The elections of 2005 were a stunning achievement. We thought that these elections would bring the Iraqis together and that as we trained Iraqi security forces, we could accomplish our mission with fewer American troops.

"But in 2006, the opposite happened. The violence in Iraq particularly in Baghdad overwhelmed the political gains the Iraqis had made. Al Qaeda terrorists and Sunni insurgents recognized the mortal danger that Iraq's elections posed for their cause. And they responded with outrageous acts of murder aimed at innocent Iraqis. They blew up one of the holiest shrines in Shia Islam the Golden Mosque of Samarra in a calculated effort to provoke Iraq's Shia population to retaliate. Their strategy worked. Radical Shia elements, some supported by Iran, formed death squads. And the result was a vicious cycle of sectarian violence that continues today.
"The situation in Iraq is unacceptable to the American people and it is unacceptable to me. Our troops in Iraq have fought bravely. They have done everything we have asked them to do. Where mistakes have been made, the responsibility rests with me.
"It is clear that we need to change our strategy in Iraq. So my national security team, military commanders, and diplomats conducted a comprehensive review. We consulted Members of Congress from both parties, allies abroad, and distinguished outside experts. We benefited from the thoughtful recommendations of the Iraq Study Group a bipartisan panel led by former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton. In our discussions, we all agreed that there is no magic formula for success in Iraq. And one message came through loud and clear: Failure in Iraq would be a disaster for the United States.
"The consequences of failure are clear: Radical Islamic extremists would grow in strength and gain new recruits. They would be in a better position to topple moderate governments, create chaos in the region, and use oil revenues to fund their ambitions. Iran would be emboldened in its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Our enemies would have a safe haven from which to plan and launch attacks on the American people. On September the 11th, 2001, we saw what a refuge for extremists on the other side of the world could bring to the streets of our own cities. For the safety of our people, America must succeed in Iraq.
"The most urgent priority for success in Iraq is security, especially in Baghdad. Eighty percent of Iraq's sectarian violence occurs within 30 miles of the capital. This violence is splitting Baghdad into sectarian enclaves, and shaking the confidence of all Iraqis. Only the Iraqis can end the sectarian violence and secure their people. And their government has put forward an aggressive plan to do it.
"Our past efforts to secure Baghdad failed for two principal reasons: There were not enough Iraqi and American troops to secure neighborhoods that had been cleared of terrorists and insurgents. And there were too many restrictions on the troops we did have. Our military commanders reviewed the new Iraqi plan to ensure that it addressed these mistakes. They report that it does. They also report that this plan can work.
"Let me explain the main elements of this effort: The Iraqi government will appoint a military commander and two deputy commanders for their capital. The Iraqi government will deploy Iraqi Army and National Police brigades across Baghdad's nine districts. When these forces are fully deployed, there will be 18 Iraqi Army and National Police brigades committed to this effort along with local police. These Iraqi forces will operate from local police stations conducting patrols, setting up checkpoints, and going door-to-door to gain the trust of Baghdad residents.
"This is a strong commitment. But for it to succeed, our commanders say the Iraqis will need our help. So America will change our strategy to help the Iraqis carry out their campaign to put down sectarian violence and bring security to the people of Baghdad. This will require increasing American force levels. So I have committed more than 20,000 additional American troops to Iraq. The vast majority of them five brigades will be deployed to Baghdad. These troops will work alongside Iraqi units and be embedded in their formations. Our troops will have a well-defined mission: to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad needs.

[181] Nikolas Gvosdev and Ray Takeyh: Mr. President, this war is over. Bush on Iraq, in "Intrnational Herald Tribune" 11.01.2007:
In a final attempt to salvage his presidency and secure his legacy, President George W. Bush has announced yet another "strategy for victory" which calls for introducing 21,000 additional troops into the killing fields of Iraq. The point that the

president and much of the Washington establishment refuses to concede is that the Iraq war is already over.
Saddam Hussein is dead and any remnants of his WMD program are utterly dismantled. But the United States has proven incapable of achieving any of its other lofty objectives.
For nearly four years, America has tried to reconstitute a kinder, gentler Iraq, ignoring the fact that Iraq has always been an artificial entity — an incongruous collection of sectarian groups cobbled together by the British empire and then sustained by Sunni terror.
The American invasion has irrevocably unraveled that arrangement, as the empowered Shiites, embittered Sunnis and secessionist Kurds have little desire to concede power to their sectarian foes.
Yes, a loosely partitioned Iraq with a degree of wealth sharing among its provinces may come into existence. But such an arrangement will likely follow only after a protracted and bloody civil war, and it is this civil war that American forces — augmented or not — can no longer prevent.
Nor can one find justification for the president's claim that the battle of Iraq will "determine the direction of the global war on terror."
The sad reality is that Iraq is already the epicenter for anti-Western terrorism. Iraq is the only place in the world where prospective jihadists can engage in live-fire exercises with the U.S. military and hone their skills in battle. It is not accidental that techniques pioneered in Iraq, like "improvised explosive devices" (IEDs), have been exported to other battlefields, like Afghanistan.
There seems to be a fundamental misconception that there is a finite number of potential terrorists in the world and that the use of Iraq as "bait" will lure them for destruction at the hands of U.S. forces.
The emotive picture of Arab suffering at the hands of Occidental powers has already generated countless volunteers and recruits for Al Qaeda. The American occupation has provoked a narrative of struggle and sacrifice that will radicalize Arab youth for decades to come.
President George W. Bush should take a page from Ronald Reagan's playbook. Initially, Reagan authorized the deployment of U.S. forces to Lebanon in 1983 under many of the same justifications bandied about today for why the United States must remain in Iraq — to combat terrorists, to check Syrian and Iranian influence, to prevent an escalation of sectarian conflict that could lead to a general war in the Middle East.
Pundits warned of dire consequences to American credibility if troops were withdrawn, particularly after the bombing of the Marine barracks. To his credit, however, the 40th president realized that a limited American force could not achieve any of these objectives and pulled the troops out.
With U.S. ground forces no longer held hostage to the shifting fortunes of the fighting in Lebanon, Washington was free to pursue more effective strategies to combat terrorism and to stem the impacts of Lebanon's internal tragedies on the rest of the region.
Americans have no interest in either paying the costs of becoming Iraq's new imperial warden or in waging the brutal campaign necessary to pacify the country. Instead of giving speeches on new strategies for victory, and sending off another contingent of hapless Americans into the fires of Iraq, the president would have been wiser to declare the American mission is over, and presented a plan for the gradual withdrawal of U.S. forces.
The future of Iraq is in the hands of the Iraqis. And whether through violence, negotiations or accommodation, they will be the ones that will have to determine the prospects of their country. So far, they are making choices the United States abhors — just as the Lebanese did in 1975 and the Bosnians in 1992 — and Washington has no real leverage to alter these decisions.
For the second time in its postwar history, the United States has been defeated in a war — not in military terms, but in its inability to shape political outcomes. The challenge before American leaders now is not to devise plans for prolonging the war, but to find ways for America to regain its power and to realize its interests in light of this setback.

Nikolas Gvosdev is editor of the National Interest. Ray Takeyh is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and the author of "Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic."

[182] Auszüge:
Q: What does Hamas want?
A: We in Hamas are with the general Palestinian and Arab position and we are with the consensus of the necessity of establishing a Palestinian state on the June 4 borders, including (East) Jerusalem, the right of return and the withdrawal of Israel to these borders.
Q: Does accepting the 1967 borders presuppose the existence of Israel?
A: The problem is not that there is an entity called Israel, the problem is that the Palestinian state is non-existent. There is a reality that Israel exists on Palestinian territory. The problem is that the Palestinian state does not exist. My concern as a Palestinian is to found this state. International relations are not based just on recognition.
Q: Does that mean you accept Israel exists?
A: We do not want to go into issues that complicate the struggle. We are offering a real chance that the Arabs and Palestinians believe in. There will remain a state called Israel, this is an issue of fact but the Palestinians should not be required to recognize Israel. Not all international relations are based on the basis of recognition. Who will be the one to grab this chance?
Q: Does that mean you can formally recognize Israel?
A: We as Hamas and as Palestinians do not talk about recognizing Israel or accepting it as a reality. As a Palestinian today I speak of a Palestinian and Arab demand for a state on 1967 borders. It is true that in reality there will be an entity or a state called Israel on the rest of Palestinian land. This is reality but I don't deal with it from the point of view of recognizing or admitting it. It is a fact that was the result of historical factors.
Q. Could Hamas recognize Israel in the future and alter its charter which calls for Israel's destruction?
A: Why should we occupy ourselves with a distant future when we have urgent needs to achieve in the near future? The distant future will have its own circumstances and positions could be determined then.
Q. Are you saying you will drive a harder bargain than other negotiators in past?
A. The method used by Israel in its negotiations with the PLO and in its attempts to take free compromises in return for limited small offers will not work with the Hamas movement. Hamas today has the confidence of the people and won the ballot. Hamas cannot accept the logic of bargains with Israel. Israel has to respect Palestinian rights. We are demanding a Palestinian state on the 1967 border including Jerusalem and the right of return. Israel has to say yes I agree and withdraw. But for Israel to suck us into bargains in stages and in packages, this road constitutes an attempt to weaken the Palestinian position, to lure the Palestinians into lowering the ceiling of their demands and to use the time factor and pressure which will not work with us.
Q. Will there be a new Palestinian government?
A. We had a plan to go for a government of national unity that was not technocratic but with ministers who were experts and we were searching for a formula that would not bring symbols into the government. But this project failed. Now we say 'we go to an unconditional dialogue. Each side present their vision.' And at this stage we are committed to the formation of a government of national unity headed by current Prime Minister Haniyeh and on the basis of the national accord document. Then we agree on the details regarding the formation of the government.

[183] Vgl. den Eintrag am 09.11.2006 in dieser Chronologie.

[184] Amira Hass: Wie die Hamas lernt, sich anzupassen, in „Haaretz“-online 09.01.2007:
Der Bewohner eines Flüchtlingslagers in Nablus, Mitglied der Fatah, betete für gewöhnlich in einer Moschee, die mit der Hamas in Verbindung gebracht wurde.

Als öffentlicher Angestellter ist er einer der zigtausend Menschen, die ihr Gehalt nicht regelmäßig erhalten. Alle paar Tage fand er an seiner Türschwelle ein großzügiges Lebensmittelpaket, das dort von anonymen Wohltätern hinterlegt wurde. In letzter Zeit betete er in einer anderen Moschee, die nicht mit Hamas in Verbindung gebracht wurde. Seitdem gab es keine Pakete mehr. Dies ist eine Geschichte, die zum allgemeinen Eindruck passt, die Hamas finde indirekte Wege, seine Unterstützer zu belohnen.
Solche Eindrücke basieren auf der Vermutung, dass Hamas' Wohltätigkeitsorganisationen seit langem Alternativen zu den offiziellen Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen geschaffen haben. Wie dem auch sei, die erste der Organisationen, die palästinensischen Familien Hilfe in der Not gewähren, ist die „United Nations Relief and Works Agency“ (UNRWA): Im zweiten Quartal 2006 kamen 45,6 Prozent der Hilfe an palästinensische Familien von der UNRWA. Die zweite auf der Liste ist das palästinensische Wohlfahrtsministerium, mit 14,4 Prozent der Hilfe. Verschiedene Wohlfahrtsorganisationen, (von denen viele mit der Hamas in Verbindung gebracht werden), erbringen nicht mehr als 3.5 Prozent der erbrachten Hilfe. Trotzdem beeinflusst der oben erwähnte Eindruck das Auftreten der Führungskreise der Hamas. Entgegen ihrem Anspruch, „die Regierung des Widerstands gegen die Besatzung" zu sein, im Gegensatz zur „Regierung der Anpassung an die Besatzung" der Fatah, begann die Hamas ihre Vorgängerin bereits in dem Moment zu imitieren, als sie eine Regierung im vorgegebenen Format etablierte, ein Format, das von Yasser Arafats Selbsttäuschung, er leite die Regierung eines "normalen Landes", geformt wurde.
Die Hamas-Regierung hat beispielsweise solche fiktiven Körperschaften wie das Jugend- und das Sport-Ministerium beibehalten, ebenso das Tourismus-Ministerium. Geeignete Ministerien, die, wie versprochen, die Besatzung bekämpfen, wurden nicht geschaffen: zum Beispiel ein Ministerium zur Bekämpfung der jüdischen Siedlungen in den besetzten Gebieten und ein Ministerium für Familienzusammenführung.
Diese Tendenz zum Wetteifern setzt sich fort in der Welle politischer Besetzungen von Posten in den diversen Ministerien und erreichte einen Höhepunkt in der Schaffung der militärischen „Executive Force" des Innenministeriums. Arafat und Fatah vermehrten inflationär die Anzahl der Sicherheitskräfte, um so Arbeits- und Erwerbslosen-Unterstützung zu umgehen und außerdem loyales Klientel zu schaffen. Als die israelische Armee letzte Woche mitten in Ramallah angriff, wurden die Leute der Präsidentengarde, die sonst jedes Mal, wenn der Konvoi des Präsidenten der palästinensischen Autonomiebehörde Machmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) durch die Straßen fährt, tätig werden, um den Verkehr umzuleiten, wohl vom Erdboden verschluckt. Auch hinderten weder sie noch irgendwelche anderen Sicherheitskräfte am Sonntag [07.01.2007] Unbekannte daran, etwa 20 Läden im Zentrum von Ramallah in Brand zu setzen.
Was machen die da bei Hamas? Genau dasselbe. Sie etablieren eine eigene Organisation und versprechen, sie auf 12.000 Leute auszuweiten. Auch sie versorgen ihr Klientel.
Die Hamas-Regierung weist die Behauptung zurück, sie verdanke ihre Existenz den Oslo-Verträgen. Gleichzeitig hat sie aber die ungerechte Verteilung des Budgets zwischen zivilen und „Sicherheits-"Ministerien – Arafats Erbe – abgesegnet: 2006 wurde dieses Ungleichgewicht aufrechterhalten, als nur sieben Prozent des Haushalts an das Gesundheitsministerium gingen, im Vergleich dazu gingen 24,3 Prozent an das Ministerium für innere und nationale Sicherheit. Hier ist die von der Oslo-Regierung bestimmte Haushaltsverteilung aus irgendeinem Grunde unantastbar.
Ebenso wie die Leute der Sicherheitskräfte unter der Fatah-Regierung haben Hamas-Sicherheitskräfte nicht nur auf ihre Rivalen, bewaffnete Fatah-Männer, das Feuer eröffnet, sondern auch auf unbewaffnete Demonstranten, die am Donnerstag [04.01.2007] Abend in Djebalya auf die Straße gingen, um die Belagerung des Hauses einer leitenden Persönlichkeit der Fatah durch die Männer der „Executive Forces" aufzuheben. Ein 18jähriger Demonstrant wurde getötet, und etwa dreißig weitere wurden verletzt.
Hinter den rivalisierenden Sicherheitskräften stehen Politiker von Hamas und Fatah, die um die Kontrolle ringen. Die Hamas argumentiert mit Recht, Fatah habe seit den Wahlen alles getan, um einen Putsch herbeizuführen. Die palästinensische

Öffentlichkeit hat aber nicht Hamas gewählt, weil diese Israel nicht anerkennt. Sie wählte Hamas, weil sie eine Änderung der Vorgehensweise der unabhängigen Regierung wollte, so begrenzt sie auch sein möge. Im Laufe der Zeit jedoch beweist Hamas immer mehr, dass sie gut ist in Erklärungen, aber schwach darin, sich um ihr Volk insgesamt zu kümmern, und wenn es um die Realität der Besatzung geht, bereit ist, sich anzupassen.

Übersetzung aus dem Hebräischen von Gudrun Weichenhan-Mer, München

[185] Dazu das Interview mit Roni Hammermann in der Menüleiste „Erklärungen, Interviews und Anzeigen" dieser Homepage.

[186] Über seinen jüngsten Besuch in der Westbank im Rahmen der „Kampagne Olivenöl", nach dem er am Flughafen Tel Aviv schweren Kontrollen unterworfen wurde, verfasste Jochi Weil (Zürich) einen Bericht unter dem Titel „Fair Trade Konferenz in Palästina":

Vom 26. bis 29. November 2006 fand in Zababdeh, unweit von Jenin in der Westbank, die erste Fair Trade Konferenz über Produktion, Kauf, Verkauf und Export von Olivenöl aus Palästina statt. Organisiert wurden diese drei Tage von PARC, Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees, in Ramallah. PARC ist seit der Gründung der Kampagne Olivenöl im Jahre 2001, eine in der Schweiz inzwischen recht bekannte Solidaritätsaktion zur Existenzsicherung palästinensischer Kleinbauernfamilien, deren Partnerin. So war es denn nicht erstaunlich, dass ein Vertreter der Kampagne an besagter Konferenz teilgenommen hat.

Die Einreise im Ben Gurion Airport war diesmal etwas problematisch. Wahrheitsgemäß nannte ich den Grund meines Aufenthalts, was zu Folge hatte, dass ich für ca. 10 Minuten befragt wurde. Anschließend fuhren ein Vertreter einer Fair Trade Organisation aus Japan und ich nach Ramallah zu PARC. Er war vorher während 5 Stunden bei der Einreise am Flughafen festgehalten und befragt worden – reine Schikane aus meiner Sicht.

In Ramallah trafen gegen Abend die TeilnehmerInnen aus Frankreich, Belgien, Italien, Holland, Kanada ein. Zusammen mit PalästinenserInnen fuhren wir bald mit einem Bus und unserem Gepäck in Richtung Jenin. Nach etwa 2 1/2 Stunden kamen wir in Zababdeh an, wo wir vom Bürgermeister, dem Gouverneur von Jenin und weiteren Persönlichkeiten herzlich willkommen geheißen wurden.

Was ist ein fairer Preis?

Der folgende Tag war für alle Beteiligten streng. Insgesamt waren wir etwa 70 TeilnehmerInnen, davon ca. 60 PalästinenserInnen, viele VertreterInnen von PARC, einige von ähnlichen Organisationen und Produzenten. Etwa 10 Leute aus dem Ausland vertraten Fair Trade Organisationen und die Kampagne in der Schweiz, also PartnerInnen/KundInnen von PARC. Anwesend war auch der Leiter und eine Mitarbeiterin der DEZA-Vertretung aus Jerusalem, welche ein Projekt zur Steigerung der Qualität des Olivenöls unterstützt.

Es folgte Kurzreferate über verschiedene Aspekte Palästinas im internationalen Handel und am Nachmittag über fairen Handel zur nachhaltigen Entwicklung und nationaler Unabhängigkeit.

Eingeprägt hat sich bei mir von Salim Abu Ghazalehs Ausführungen vor allem die Antwort auf die Frage des fairen Preises: *Es ist dies der Marktpreis + 25 – 30%.* Angesichts der weltweiten neoliberalen Globalisierung, welche auch in Palästina Einzug hält, ist es wichtig, dass den KleinproduzentInnen von Olivenöl ein gerechter Preis bezahlt wird; dies als Würdigung ihrer Arbeit und für die Bestreitung des Lebensunterhalts ihrer Familien, die oft arm sind, was mit der israelischen Besatzung zusammenhängt. In den Referaten wurde immer wieder zur Transparenz aufgerufen, bei den Qualitätsmerkmalen des Olivenöls und der Preisbildung. Wichtig ist, dass ProduzentInnen und AbnehmerInnen des Öls an der Konferenz Gelegenheit bekommen haben, je die Bedürfnisse der anderen Seite zu vernehmen. Ich habe erfahren, dass bei der Festsetzung des Preises zwischen den Kleinbauern und PARC gestritten wird, weil die ausländischen PartnerInnen zwar bereit sind, faire Preise zu bezahlen, gleichzeitig jedoch auch die Kosten im Ausland zu berücksichtigen haben.

An diesem Tag wurde mir bewusst, dass bezüglich Preis auch in Palästina mit „harten Bandagen" gekämpft wird und große Preisunterschiede, die eine Gruppe der Kampagne Olivenöl vor einem Jahr erfahren hatten, damit zu tun hatten.

Beeindruckende Qualitätssteigerung
Aufgrund des Referats über die Steigerung der Qualität des Olivenöls anhand von Untersuchungen wurde klar, dass diesbezüglich enorme Anstrengungen unternommen wurden, um die Werte des Säuregehalts und der Proxidität zu senken – unter die Normen im EU-Raum.
Die Besatzung muss weg
Am Abend dann wurde den Anwesenden der Dokumentarfilm „The Iron Wall“ gezeigt, den Mohammed Alatar im Auftrag von PARC realisiert hat. Der Film ist ein erschütterndes Dokument über die israelische Besatzung. Schwerpunkt sind einerseits die Mauer und der Zaun, andererseits zum Teil kriminelles Verhalten von SiedlerInnen in Hebron, was mir die Schamröte ins Gesicht trieb. Besonders schlimm ist eine Szene, wo Siedler Olivenbäume mit einer Motorsäge vor den Augen des palästinensischen Besitzers zerstören. Als dieser dann ob der gesetzeswidrigen Tat ausrastet, wird er von israelischen Polizisten zu Boden geworfen, es werden ihm Handschellen angelegt, und er wird abgeführt...
Angesichts der über 39 Jahren andauernden Besatzung ist es beeindruckend, welch große Verbesserungen in der Qualitätssteigerung in der Olivenölproduktion palästinensische Kleinbauern seit einem Jahr gemacht haben.
So erstaunt es denn nicht, dass PARC unlängst als Anerkennung das Label der International Federation for Alternative Trade IFAT, erhalten hatte. Ein Vertreter dieser Organisation aus Holland schilderte die hohen Anforderungen, die an fairen Handel gestellt werden.
Erfahrungsaustausch
Am folgenden Tag standen Erfahrungsberichte und Austausch mit Gästen aus dem Ausland im Zentrum eines Panels, an welchem Vertreter von Fair Trade Organisation wie Oxfam, Belgien; AltroMercat, Italien; Frankreich; Kanada; Japan im Zentrum. Wenngleich die Kampagne Olivenöl keine Fair Trade, sondern eine Solidaritäts-Organisation ist, war ich mit von der Partie. Insbesondere die Präsenz von zwei großen Organisationen, wie Oxfam und AltroMercat, welche über ihre Erfahrungen mit palästinensischem Olivenöl berichteten, war für die mehrheitlich palästinensischen ZuhörerInnen wichtig. Was bei der Kampagne Olivenöl besonderes Interesse fand, ist die Tatsache, dass der größte Teil des Gewinns aus dem Verkauf von Olivenöl, Za’tar und den Solidaritätskarten wieder nach Palästina in Unterstützungsprojekte fließt sowie auch Verständigungsarbeit zwischen Israeli und PalästinenserInnen zugute kommt.
Vor Beginn meines Berichtes brachte ich meine schmerzliche Betroffenheit über den erwähnten Film zum Ausdruck und hielt als Jude unmissverständlich fest, das Verhalten z.B. von SiedlerInnen habe nichts, aber auch gar nichts mit jüdisch-ethischen Werten zu tun.
Eurozentrisches Verhalten
Am Schluss des Podiums stellte Mohamad Hmidat von PARC seine Forschungsarbeit über D7 Stegmasterol, ein für mich als Laie neuer Test zur Bestimmung der Qualität von Olivenöl vor. Um die Beschaffenheit der Zusammensetzung zu prüfen spielen 11 verschiedene Faktoren eine Rolle. Die wichtigsten sind die Bodenbeschaffenheit, die Erntezeit, die Region und die Infektion durch die Olivenfliege. Es zeigte sich, dass in Palästina bisher nur 8% der gemachten Proben den internationalen Standards betr. D7 den oberen Wert von 0.5% nicht übersteigen. Dieser wurde nach europäischem Klima und regionalen Charakteristiken festgelegt, jedoch nicht mit den Gegebenheiten in Palästina. Der erwähnte Höchstwert scheint ein Beispiel dafür zu sein, um die Schwelle für Olivenöl aus dem Nahen Osten möglichst hoch zu setzen. Dadurch erhofft man sich Konkurrenz von Olivenöl außerhalb von Europa den Zugang zu europäischen Markt zu erschweren. Es wurde gesagt, dass aufgrund von D7 kein schädigender Einfluss auf die Gesundheit durch den Konsum von Olivenöl ersichtlich werde. Notwendig ist es, den Standard von D7 mit 0.5% als Grenze mit dem Internationalen Olive Oil Council der Region (Palästina, Syrien, Libanon, Jordanien und Israel) zu diskutieren, um hier Eurozentrismus (Italien) zu reduzieren.
Die Teilnahme an der Konferenz war für mich bedeutungsvoll, lehrreich. Was ich allerdings an entwürdigender Behandlung bei der Ausreise am Ben Gurion Airport erleben musste, spottet jeder Beschreibung...

[187] Dazu Reiner Bernstein: Von Gaza nach Genf. Die Genfer Friedensinitiative von Israelis und Palästinenser. Schwalbach/Ts. 2006, S. 68 ff.

[188] David Horowitz: Riding the waves with Ami Ayalon, in Jerusalem Post" 11.01.2007:
Interviewing Ami Ayalon is like unleashing a tidal wave. You posit a question and a great, rolling answer comes pouring out, smashing through the specific inquiry and drenching other, often quite unexpected, areas besides.
Early in the conversation, for instance, unprompted by a direct question, Ayalon was to be found advancing the immensely controversial argument that certain Israeli policies had caused murderous anti-Semitism, protesting that Israel had failed to so much as consider how its killing of Hizbullah leader Abbas Moussawi in Lebanon 15 years ago might come to fatally impact Diaspora Jews (with Hizbullah's subsequent bombings in Buenos Aires of the Israeli Embassy in 1992 and the AMIA community center building in 1994). "The State of Israel was established in order to guarantee the destiny of the Jewish people. But there are cases in the world today where Jews are suffering because of Israel's policies," he went so far as to assert.
Ayalon moved rapidly on to assault the tendency of Israel's political leaders to marginalize their potential rivals – a case of misconceived self-interest taking precedence over the good of the country.
And from there he jumped to a dissection of Israeli society into "five tribes" – Russians, Sephardim, Arabs, Haredim and the rest, a million or so plus per tribe, who "don't read the same papers or literature," and "don't go to the same schools," but "have to live together."
Impassioned and intense, it is easy to envision Ayalon having inspired and sustained subordinates during his years as the commander of the Navy and the head of the Shin Bet. But having made the leap into politics, entering this parliament as No. 6 on the Labor list, Ayalon, 61, has higher goals now. He hopes to wrest the Labor leadership from Amir Peretz in the party's primary in May and – asserting that security and management are two of the only three things he truly understands (the other being agriculture) – set about safeguarding Israelis' future and offering us hope.
Where so many Israelis despair of the possibility of partnering the Palestinians to a viable two-state solution, for Ayalon that prospect is realistic, and we ignore it at our peril.
Along with al-Quds University President Sari Nusseibeh, he has for five years been championing a six-principle path to peace. (In summary it calls for: two states for the two peoples; borders based on June 4, 1967, with the possibility of mutually agreed territorial exchanges; Jerusalem as the capital of both states, with Arab neighborhoods under Palestinian sovereignty, Jewish neighborhoods under Israeli sovereignty, and the "holy basin" under no sovereignty; Palestinian refugees returning only to Palestine and Jews only to Israel; the Palestinian state being demilitarized, and all this constituting the "end of conflict.") And he has collected hundreds of thousands of Israeli and Palestinian signatories to a "People's Voice" petition endorsing this approach.
With arms flowing into Gaza and Kassams flying out, with Hamas refusing to relinquish its opposition to Israel and the Palestinian public refusing to relinquish Hamas, dovish Israeli politicians have an uphill struggle. And a dove Ayalon plainly is, albeit one determined to communicate with his ideological adversaries, and one who does not encourage moderation at all costs, as he makes clear here with a moral evisceration of a policy of restraint that prevents the IDF from firing on Kassam gangs.
Will Labor Party members prove susceptible to Ayalon's credentials and sentiments, even with ex-prime minister Ehud Barak in the race? It's possible. Some polls in the last few days have had Barak leading the pack, but others – including an Israel Radio survey on Thursday – are putting Ayalon ahead. The wider Israeli public? That's a whole other story. But Ami Ayalon, clearly, is not a man to duck a challenge.
So you think you can save the country. What has to be done and how can you do it, if that's not too general a question?
No, a general question is fine. It makes it easier for me to say what I want to say.

But the real question is not what has to be done. Lots of people know what has to be done. The question is much more about the "how" than the "what."
On the big issues, the arguments are small. In the diplomatic sphere, everyone understands that if Israel is to remain Jewish and democratic, it needs a two-state arrangement, and that the path will be very painful and will require us to return settlers. I'm saying nothing new, nothing that is not accepted by 80 percent of the Israeli public...
In so far as it depends on us...
Okay, so now the arguments begin. The arguments over worldview. I tend to the worldview that the future has not been determined, not been set in stone... We can make a difference...
We live in a very complex world. The answers are not simple. I fear that the discussion is so complex that people return to the simplistic answers: "Everyone is against us, stop wasting our time, whatever we do they'll hate us." I don't accept that...
I only know how to do three things... I understand security, agriculture and management... In running any major organization you need to create a leadership team that gathers people from different disciplines and backgrounds who complement each other, not just those who think like you, believe in you and only tell you what you want to hear...
The same goes for politics. The grave mistake that our political leaders have been making is that on winning power they pushed away everybody who might threaten them. So now we're in a battle [for the Labor leadership] and we must never lose sight of the fact that when it's over, we'll all have to work together...
The same goes, incidentally, for the discussion with the settlers of Gaza, Judea and Samaria: Let's not forget, we're all the same people and the discussion about what constitutes a Jewish, democratic state, about what it is we came here to be – I don't have that discussion with myself. I have it with people who have different positions to mine. People who believe in maintaining the whole land of Israel, in a divine promise.
After all, we are five tribes here, not all of whom are Jewish, who have to find a way to live together.
Five tribes?
Russians, Sephardim, Arabs, Haredim and the rest – a million or so plus per tribe. We don't read the same papers or literature, we don't go to the same schools, we don't go to the same pubs and yet we have to live together...
We measure ourselves in terms of national growth and yes, that's an important barometer. But if we don't recognize that the [low] barometer of agreement is causing an inability to function together, then the growth won't get us anywhere. And if growth only enriches the top 10% and makes the bottom 50% poorer, then that's another rift... [My thinking on this is] different from most of my political colleagues.
The same goes for the Palestinians. I claim that most of the Palestinians, like most of the Israelis, know more or less how an accord will look and most of us and most of them are prepared to pay the price.
On the Israeli side maybe, but on theirs? Maybe if all of the Palestinians were Sari Nusseibeh...
Well, not all the Palestinians are Sari Nusseibeh and not all the Israelis are Ami Ayalon. The question is, what are the trends? Most of the Palestinians want two states for two people, period. I can prove it. In every survey...
The most representative survey was surely their elections.
No! What are you talking about? Do *our* election results represent *our* people's worldviews?
One of our problems is that we don't read Palestinian literature, poetry or newspapers and yet we claim to understand the Palestinians. Most of the Palestinians want an agreement. What's the argument about? As with us, the "how."
There are those who say "the Jews only understand the language of violence and force and so the struggle is the only way." From their perspective, what caused Israel to withdraw from the concept of greater Israel? The first intifada. They say that it prompted the change that led to the Madrid Conference and to Oslo. What made Arik Sharon carry out disengagement? They say, the second intifada.

They say: "We took a historic decision in 1988 – we the PLO – to recognize Israel. And we've been seeking the way forward ever since. In 1993, we decided in essence that we were putting aside the armed struggle. The Palestine national movement split. The 'moderate faction,' headed by Arafat, said, 'Folks, it's two states for two peoples. And the strategy is negotiation.' The second faction, headed by [Farouk] Kaddoumi, stayed in Tunis and said, 'Folks, you're traitors. What about the right of return? What about Greater Palestine? What about 1948?'"
There was a split. Not to mention the terrorist opposition – Hamas and Islamic Jihad and so on. Arafat, at the time backed by most Palestinians, entered negotiations.
I'm not going to talk now about all the mistakes Arafat made in the negotiations. There is no warm place in my heart for Arafat. But from the Palestinian point of view, it's all one big Israeli conspiracy. After all, in 1993 there were 100,000 settlers in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. And they expected fewer settlements, fewer settlers, fewer roadblocks and bypass roads. Yet by 2000, when [the negotiation process] all fell apart, there were 220,000 settlers. Every day, they saw more settlers, more settlements, more roadblocks, more humiliation. And they said, "What's going on here?"
You know when the penny dropped for them? After Baruch Goldstein's murders [at the Cave of the Machpelah] on Purim 1994. They couldn't understand why Rabin didn't take the few Jewish families out of Hebron and move them to Kiryat Arba. Instead, he placed the whole of Arab Hebron under curfew and turned the Cave of the Patriarchs into a place where Muslims have a hard time praying. They said to themselves: "If he can't evacuate a few families after murder, who can promise us that he'll ever evacuate settlements?"
You say you have no "warm place" for Arafat. But apparently you don't think there was a genuine opportunity presented to him [by Israel at Camp David] in 2000.
Of course there was an opportunity.
And he chose not to take it?
Absolutely.
So why believe that there was a genuine split between him and the likes of Kaddoumi? When the opportunity arose, he didn't take it. He didn't want it.
He wanted it, but he was afraid.
He was afraid for his fate because he hadn't prepared his people for compromise?
Indeed.
But you say that most of the Palestinians supported him and he wanted coexistence, and yet...
No. Wait a minute. Arafat wanted an agreement. Was the agreement Arafat wanted one we could live with? I can't say.
But what was not ripe in the 1990s is, in my opinion, ripe now.
We mature by breaking taboos. The Oslo process had lots of failings. But it brought us one step forward. For us, it shattered the dream of Greater Israel. For them, it shattered the dream of Greater Palestine.
At the start of the process, in 1993-94, even Rabin didn't talk about evacuating settlements. Let's be straight about this. But that taboo has been broken. At Camp David 2000, with all its failings – and I have a lot of complaints for Ehud Barak – Barak broke the Israeli taboo on Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley. Before Camp David, it was traitorous to speak of [giving] the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem to Palestine. Today, [Prime Minister] Olmert says it. Today, it is part of the Israeli consensus.
Things have changed there [among the Palestinians] too. What Barak did for us, Arafat did not do for them. On our side, the taboos are broken. On their side, the taboos are now being questioned. And on the Palestinian side, the deepest, most problematic taboo is the right of return. If Prof. Nusseibeh and I have contributed anything to the historical discussion, it lies here: This [the People's Voice principles] is the first and so far only document that makes utterly clear that Palestinians will return only to Palestine, and the Jews only to Israel.
How many Palestinians have signed the document?
170,000.
It is your belief that, today, most Palestinians are ready for an agreement that we can live with?
Today, yes.

On what basis do you make that claim?
On the basis of surveys.
Surveys that show a readiness to relinquish the demand for a right of return?
No, I present this differently [in surveys that I commission]. You'd never ask, in an Israeli survey, "Are you prepared to evacuate settlers?" What we ask is, "You hear on the radio that Israel and the Palestinians have reached an agreement on two states. Are you in favor or against?" And we set out our six principles. Sixty-seven percent [of Israelis] say yes.
We also add two more elements: One, in addition to the agreement, that Israel will build a security fence along the agreed border – after land swaps, with settlement blocs on our side, and land that will go to them. And two, that Israel will get security guarantees from the international community and America. And we get to 78% support.
On the Palestinian side, we don't add in those two additional elements. We get results between 60 and 65%, depending on the extent to which they feel there is someone to talk to. When they had the sense that Israel was leaving Gaza, and Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas] had been elected, and there was a feeling of continuation – after all, the whole question was whether we were leaving Gaza and creating a big Palestinian jail, or leaving Gaza as a pilot for more – the level of support for our view of an agreement [went up]...
If you can build a sense of mutual confidence, most of the public on both sides today [is in favor]. No confidence – no process.
Yet the Palestinian people elected Hamas. How do you change that?
We have to launch a diplomatic initiative. The [summer's] war in Lebanon has paradoxically created an opportunity. It has made plain to the moderate Sunni world around us that we are not the only problem, or even the main problem, in the Middle East. They now recognize that the primary threat to the stability of the Middle East is Iran and its nuclear program. And the second threat, which also threatens their regimes, is the spread of Islamic extremism. The Saudis are terrified.
And this is a wonderful basis to launch a pragmatic, realpolitik initiative. We can't try again to divide the world into good and bad, into right and wrong. We can't demand democracy as a pre-condition.
The whole approach of the neoconservatives – one of whom learned Hebrew and is named Sharansky – is plain wrong in the Middle East context. In this region, democracy put Hamas into power. In conditions of frustration and humiliation and religious-nationalist alienation. It happened too in Algeria. And look what is happening in the political vacuum in Iraq. Democracy is a much more gradual process.
There is an axis of evil – Iraq, Syria, Hizbullah. But there is a moderate axis that balances it. It begins in Morocco and Tunis, passes via Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Turkey, and reaches to the Emirates. This group prioritizes the threats as we do...
So I say, create a pragmatic axis that pushes forward a diplomatic process with three aims: one, stop the spreading influence and empowerment of Iran; two, stop the strengthening and spread of radical Islam; and three, enable a diplomatic process between Israelis and Palestinians. Abu Mazen is part of this axis.
To do this, we have to give up on the erroneous traditional Israeli position that we have to talk to each party alone and can't negotiate with them all together because they'll be stronger. No, I want to talk to everyone who accepts my world view...
If Syria wants to join, by all means: Let it define its priorities in the same way, join the fight against terror like us, and it would be welcome. And I should say, too, that the Saudi initiative is a basis. It's already in the preamble of the road map... Anyone who accepts the fact of Israel's existence, in my view, we should talk with...
If Abu Mazen is the representative of a minority of Palestinians, then he's an Israeli collaborator. But if he is part of a wide, moderate, Sunni, Arab initiative, that weakens Hamas.
Why did the Palestinians choose Hamas? Because of the corruption in Fatah. And because the Fatah strategy had failed. From the Palestinian perspective, the path of struggle and terror prevailed. Again, from their point of view, we only understand the language of force.

After Arafat died, I went to the prime minister [Sharon] and I told him, "Okay, there was an obstacle, but he's gone now. Why don't you go to Abu Mazen and negotiate. Tell him, 'We're going to leave [Gaza]. But if you want the settlements, take them. If you want to house refugees there, fine.'" But this zero-sum game? That if we see smiling Palestinians, it's an Israeli failure? Come on.
The Palestinians chose Hamas. But only 15-17% of the Palestinians accept the fundamentalist approach of Hamas. Beyond that, support for Hamas stemmed from anger at Fatah corruption and recognition that the Hamas strategy works, that the negotiated path doesn't work. But we can change that [and negotiate].
By the way, the notion of negotiating with Syria and not negotiating with Palestinian moderates is a dramatic mistake. The axis of evil is not an ideological alliance. The Syrians are not even Shi'ites. What unifies them is the belief that the path to achievement in the Middle East is supporting terrorism. Why? Because, in their view, that's the only language Israel understands.
It is the problematic connection between Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hizbullah and Syria that Israel needs to break. What's most important is to make clear that the only language that works in the Middle East is the language of negotiation. Facing those who don't negotiate with us, we're strong enough to survive here for another 400 years and fight. But we'll fight only because we want to negotiate and have no partner. That's not the situation today...
An Israeli-Palestinian diplomatic initiative, and the creation of a pragmatic coalition, would also constitute an incredible message in regard to the level of violence against Jewish targets in the Diaspora. There is a connection. And we can impact it.
By extension, should we, now, be sticking to the policy of restraint in Gaza because of the possible impact on the Diaspora?
I favor the policy [of restraint], but there's a limit. It's appropriate if it enables a diplomatic process and strengthens Palestinian moderates. But when it is transformed into orders that prevent the IDF from opening fire on a gang that is about to fire Kassams, it is unconscionable. What are we saying to the residents of Sderot? With all due respect to our desire to bolster the moderates, this is flagrantly immoral and wrong and must be stopped.
Incidentally, statements in favor of a diplomatic process and the parameters of a permanent accord will do much more to bolster Abu Mazen than taking down 40 roadblocks, releasing 20 terrorists or showing restraint that endangers Israeli lives...
How do you suggest dealing with Iran?
Iran is the ultimate threat. Iran is not only threatening us. The most effective way to stop Iran going nuclear is to create that axis that will make every international action all the more effective.
We cannot accept a nuclear Iran. Together with the international community, we need the policy that will stop it. Beyond that, I don't want to discuss this...
We don't need to behave as though we have all the time in the world, but still...
Some of the apocalyptic declarations by politicians...
It's not only politicians who are issuing strident warnings.
We live in a complex world. Simplistic solutions don't work anymore. You have to create an atmosphere that enables serious debate. And there's no such atmosphere.
Going back to the Lebanon war, [we're currently] a nation that doesn't know how to take a decision to go to war, to ask questions, to discuss alternatives, not to act with undue haste. We need to broadcast determination and power, but we have to be aware of the limits of power. We have to remember that leadership is tested according to the process by which it decides to go to war, and the way it prepares the army to win and, most importantly, by the way it prevents war. Our leadership doesn't understand this.
What should have been done differently on July 12?
The government of Israel should have summoned the heads of the army and asked for alternatives.
As I said on the day, the prime minister should have appeared on TV and told the world's leaders that Israel's sovereignty had been ruptured, soldiers killed and captured, and that "you, the international community, including Fuad Saniora, have four or five days to return our soldiers safely, and then we'll decide whether or not to respond."

Then, he should have given the order to call up all the reservists and clean out all the bomb shelters and weigh the options. Think all night. Ask the army, what is the state of readiness? Estimate the Lebanese response. Consider the options. Should I launch a three-day air assault, and cause the collapse of the Lebanese infrastructure, and then, with the international community on our side, and the G-8 issuing an unprecedented decision and Saniora [Fuad Siniora] begging for a cease-fire, agree to talks at Rosh Hanikra? Or, should I say, "You wanted war, here's a war?"
Do you know how long we prepared for the first Lebanon war? A year and a half. Arik Sharon, Raful Eitan and Menachem Begin, the defense minister, the chief of staff and the prime minister, reached a decision that there was no choice but for a military operation against the terror infrastructure in Lebanon. We spent 18 months preparing until we said, "Okay, we're ready," and then waited for the opportunity. And then they tried to kill the ambassador [Shlomo Argov in London] and we said, "Gentlemen, we're invading Lebanon."
What was the hurry this time? Did anyone seriously think that in a military operation we would get the two soldiers back? Nobody believed that for a moment.
But the [Israeli leadership] did believe that they would destroy Hizbullah?
Then they thought so without asking a single question. Anyone who takes a decision to go to war on the basis of less than two hours discussion shouldn't claim to know anything.
In the security establishment for the past four of five years, the IDF had taken a decision: There will be no surprise war. Israel wants an educational system, growth, revenue, and so it reduced its defense budget. And there was an intifada and the need to prepare for the Iranian threat. So the geostrategic situation was assessed: the Americans are in Iraq, we have peace with Jordan, Syria, with all due respect, will not launch a land grab. There'll be no surprise war.
[And in the event of a change, the assessment ran,] we'll have months to prepare – to do the training and replenish the supplies and buy the spare parts. To get ready, as we did before the 1982 war. That was the mindset. And in such a circumstance, you can't say, "Guys, let's go, two hours, war." It doesn't work like that.
So why did that happen?
That's what you have committees of inquiry for.
Now they say, "We didn't know the army wasn't ready." How can you say you didn't know? "I'd only been defense minister for a month and a half or two. I'm not to blame." [sighs] Listen, I was head of the Shin Bet. I understood no more about the Shin Bet than the defense minister understands about the security establishment. I knew I had one task: to ask hard questions. That's all. Leadership that doesn't know [the answers], must know to ask the questions.
Do you know what is Israel's tragedy? That on July 12, we had a leadership that didn't know to ask questions. And we had a military leadership that didn't know to give answers to questions that hadn't been asked.
In the past, it never happened. In the Six Day War, we had a giant of a chief of staff [Yitzhak Rabin], and even though the defense minister/prime minister [Levi] Eshkol was weak, he [Rabin] knew to give the answers to the questions he wasn't asked. There's never before been a situation where the entire apparatus failed: the chief of staff, the defense minister, and the prime minister. That's our tragedy.
What's crucial now is determining how the future will look. I come from a place where it is said that if a captain doesn't know his destination, no wind will sail him there. We need to know where we're going. Once you do know, the crew can survive in a stormy sea, without food or water, so long as there is hope. That's the ultimate challenge of leadership today: to create hope.

[189] Uzi Mahnaimi and Sarah Baxter: Revealed: Israel plans nuclear strike on Iran, in “The Sunday Times” 7.1.2007: ISRAEL has drawn up secret plans to destroy Iran's uranium enrichment facilities with tactical nuclear weapons.
Two Israeli air force squadrons are training to blow up an Iranian facility using low-yield nuclear "bunker-busters", according to several Israeli military sources.
The attack would be the first with nuclear weapons since 1945, when the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Israeli weapons would each have a force equivalent to one-fifteenth of the Hiroshima bomb.

Under the plans, conventional laser-guided bombs would open "tunnels" into the targets. "Mini-nukes" would then immediately be fired into a plant at Natanz, exploding deep underground to reduce the risk of radioactive fallout.
"As soon as the green light is given, it will be one mission, one strike and the Iranian nuclear project will be demolished," said one of the sources.
The plans, disclosed to The Sunday Times last week, have been prompted in part by the Israeli intelligence service Mossad's assessment that Iran is on the verge of producing enough enriched uranium to make nuclear weapons within two years.
Israeli military commanders believe conventional strikes may no longer be enough to annihilate increasingly well-defended enrichment facilities. Several have been built beneath at least 70ft of concrete and rock. However, the nuclear-tipped bunker-busters would be used only if a conventional attack was ruled out and if the United States declined to intervene, senior sources said.
Israeli and American officials have met several times to consider military action.
Military analysts said the disclosure of the plans could be intended to put pressure on Tehran to halt enrichment, cajole America into action or soften up world opinion in advance of an Israeli attack.
Some analysts warned that Iranian retaliation for such a strike could range from disruption of oil supplies to the West to terrorist attacks against Jewish targets around the world.
Israel has identified three prime targets south of Tehran which are believed to be involved in Iran's nuclear programme:Natanz, where thousands of centrifuges are being installed for uranium enrichment.
A uranium conversion facility near Isfahan where, according to a statement by an Iranian vice-president last week, 250 tons of gas for the enrichment process have been stored in tunnels.
A heavy water reactor at Arak, which may in future produce enough plutonium for a bomb.
Israeli officials believe that destroying all three sites would delay Iran's nuclear programme indefinitely and prevent them from having to live in fear of a "second Holocaust".
The Israeli government has warned repeatedly that it will never allow nuclear weapons to be made in Iran, whose president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has declared that "Israel must be wiped off the map".
Robert Gates, the new US defence secretary, has described military action against Iran as a "last resort", leading Israeli officials to conclude that it will be left to them to strike.
Israeli pilots have flown to Gibraltar in recent weeks to train for the 2,000-mile round trip to the Iranian targets. Three possible routes have been mapped out, including one over Turkey.
Air force squadrons based at Hatzerim in the Negev desert and Tel Nof, south of Tel Aviv, have trained to use Israel's tactical nuclear weapons on the mission. The preparations have been overseen by Major General Eliezer Shkedi, commander of the Israeli air force.
Sources close to the Pentagon said the United States was highly unlikely to give approval for tactical nuclear weapons to be used. One source said Israel would have to seek approval "after the event", as it did when it crippled Iraq's nuclear reactor at Osirak with airstrikes in 1981.
Scientists have calculated that although contamination from the bunker-busters could be limited, tons of radioactive uranium compounds would be released.
The Israelis believe that Iran's retaliation would be constrained by fear of a second strike if it were to launch its Shehab-3 ballistic missiles at Israel.
However, American experts warned of repercussions, including widespread protests that could destabilise parts of the Islamic world friendly to the West.
Colonel Sam Gardiner, a Pentagon adviser, said Iran could try to close the Strait of Hormuz, the route for 20% of the world's oil.
Some sources in Washington said they doubted if Israel would have the nerve to attack Iran. However, Dr Ephraim Sneh, the deputy Israeli defence minister, said last month: "The time is approaching when Israel and the international community will have to decide whether to take military action against Iran."

[190] Vgl. die Eintragung am 15.12.2006 in dieser Chronologie.

[191] Brent Scowcroft. Getting the Middle East Back on Our Side, in "The New York Times" 4.1.2007: The Iraq Study Group report was released into a sea of unrealistic expectations. Inevitably, it disappointed hopes for a clear path through the morass of Iraq, because there is no "silver bullet" solution to the difficulties in which we find ourselves.
But the report accomplished a great deal. It brought together some of America's best minds across party lines, and it outlined with clarity and precision the key factors at issue in Iraq. In doing so, it helped catalyze the debate about our Iraq policy and crystallize the choices we face. Above all, it emphasized the importance of focusing on American national interests, not only in Iraq but in the region.
However, the report, which calls the situation in Iraq "grave and deteriorating," does not focus on what could be the most likely outcome of its analysis. Should the Iraqis be unable or unwilling to play the role required of them, the report implies that we would have no choice but to withdraw, and then blame our withdrawal on Iraqi failures. But here the report essentially stops.
An American withdrawal before Iraq can, in the words of the president, "govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself" would be a strategic defeat for American interests, with potentially catastrophic consequences both in the region and beyond. Our opponents would be hugely emboldened, our friends deeply demoralized. Iran, heady with the withdrawal of its principal adversary, would expand its influence through Hezbollah and Hamas more deeply into Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories and Jordan. Our Arab friends would rightly feel we had abandoned them to face alone a radicalism that has been greatly inflamed by American actions in the region and which could pose a serious threat to their own governments.
The effects would not be confined to Iraq and the Middle East. Energy resources and transit choke points vital to the global economy would be subjected to greatly increased risk. Terrorists and extremists elsewhere would be emboldened. And the perception, worldwide, would be that the American colossus had stumbled, was losing its resolve and could no longer be considered a reliable ally or friend — or the guarantor of peace and stability in this critical region.
To avoid these dire consequences, we need to secure the support of the countries of the region themselves. It is greatly in their self-interest to give that support, just as they did in the 1991 Persian Gulf conflict. Unfortunately, in recent years they have come to see it as dangerous to identify with the United States, and so they have largely stood on the sidelines.
A vigorously renewed effort to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict could fundamentally change both the dynamics in the region and the strategic calculus of key leaders. Real progress would push Iran into a more defensive posture. Hezbollah and Hamas would lose their rallying principle. American allies like Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the gulf states would be liberated to assist in stabilizing Iraq. And Iraq would finally be seen by all as a key country that had to be set right in the pursuit of regional security.
Arab leaders are now keen to resolve the 50-year-old dispute. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel may be as well. His nation's long-term security can only be assured by resolving this issue once and for all. However, only the American president can bring them to the same table.
Resuming the Arab-Israeli peace process is not a matter of forcing concessions from Israel or dragooning the Palestinians into surrender. Most of the elements of a settlement are already agreed as a result of the negotiations of 2000 and the "road map" of 2002. What is required is to summon the will of Arab and Israeli leaders, led by a determined American president, to forge the various elements into a conclusion that all parties have already publicly accepted in principle.
As for Syria and Iran, we should not be afraid of opening channels of communication, but neither should we rush to engage them as negotiating "partners." Moreover, these two countries have differing interests, expectations and points of leverage and should not be treated as though they are indistinguishable. Syria cannot be comfortable clutched solely in the embrace of Iran, and thus prying it away may be possible. Syria also has much to gain from a settlement with Israel and internal problems that such a deal might greatly ease. If we can make progress on the Palestinian front before adding Syria to the mix, it would both avoid

overloading Israel's negotiating capacity and increase the incentives for Damascus to negotiate seriously.
Iran is different. It may not be wise to make Iran integral to the regional strategy at the outset. And the nuclear issue should be dealt with on a separate track. In its present state of euphoria, Iran has little interest in making things easier for us. If, however, we make clear our determination, and if the other regional states become more engaged in stabilizing Iraq, the Iranians might grow more inclined to negotiate seriously.
While negotiations on the Arab-Israel peace process are under way, we should establish some political parameters inside Iraq that encourage moves toward reconciliation and unified government in Iraq. Other suggested options, such as an "80 percent solution" that excludes the Sunnis, or the division of the country into three parts, are not only inconsistent with reconciliation but would almost certainly pave the way to broader regional conflict and must be avoided.
American combat troops should be gradually redeployed away from intervening in sectarian conflict. That necessarily is a task for Iraqi troops, however poorly prepared they may be. Our troops should be redirected toward training the Iraqi Army, providing support and backup, combating insurgents, attenuating outside intervention and assisting in major infrastructure protection.
That does not mean the American presence should be reduced. Indeed, in the immediate future, the opposite may be true, though any increase in troop strength should be directed at accomplishing specific, defined missions. A generalized increase would be unlikely to demonstrably change the situation and, consequently, could result in increased clamor for withdrawal. But the central point is that withdrawing combat forces should not be a policy objective, but rather, the result of changes in our strategy and success in our efforts.
As we work our way through this seemingly intractable problem in Iraq, we must constantly remember that this is not just a troublesome issue from which we can walk away if it seems too costly to continue. What is at stake is not only Iraq and the stability of the Middle East, but the global perception of the reliability of the United States as a partner in a deeply troubled world. We cannot afford to fail that test.

[192] Gideon Levy: The greatest settler, in „Haaretz"-online 07.01.2007:
Among the many obituary notices published by various groups after the death of Teddy Kollek, one group's notice was conspicuous in its absence: the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements. It is a bit difficult to comprehend this ingratitude by the settlers toward the person who brought approximately 200,000 Jews to the occupied territories – perhaps more than any other person. The settlement enterprise owes a great historic debt to Kollek. Neither Rabbi Moshe Levinger nor Hanan Porat nor Aharon Domb nor Ze'ev "Zambish" Hever are responsible for settling so many Israelis beyond the Green Line as Kollek, the enlightened Viennese liberal.
The fact that most of the eulogies for the former Jerusalem mayor left out this detail and that Yesha did not embrace the mega-settler Kollek is no coincidence. Israeli society has adopted sundry and strange codes to whitewash the settlement enterprise. The settlement of the occupied territories in Jerusalem has never been considered hitnahalut (the term used for Jewish settlement in the territories). And the gargantuan neighborhoods of the capital, which were built during Teddy's term and span extensive Palestinian territory, have never been considered a controversial issue.
The fact that almost no one in the world recognizes this enterprise and the new borders it charts does not change a thing: In our eyes, but only in our eyes, not every settlement is the same and each settlement has its own moral code. But this is a game we play with ourselves. Every home built beyond the Green Line – in Yitzhar or Itamar in the West Bank, in Nov in the Golan, or in French Hill in Jerusalem – is built on occupied land and all construction on occupied land is in violation of international law. Occupation is occupation. Not everything is legal, even if it is anchored in Israeli law, as in the case of the Golan Heights and Jerusalem. The Israelis invent patents for themselves, but this sophisticated semantic laundering will not meet the legal and ethical test. The Ramot neighborhood is a settlement. There is no difference between the "neighborhood" of Pisgat Ze'ev and

the "settlement" of Givat Ze'ev. This artificial distinction does not end with the Jerusalem region. In the West Bank, distinctions are also made between settlements and "illegal outposts," another virtuoso but groundless exercise in semantics with regard to an enterprise that is entirely illegal. There are also no settlements (hitnahaluyot) in the occupied Jordan Valley, but rather yishuvim, a generic word for settlements, unrelated to the 1967 borders. An ethical blemish has never been attached to the residents of these Jordan Valley settlements. Why? Because this is the way it was determined by Labor governments at the time, when they established moshavim and kibbutzim in the Jordan Valley – not "settlements." Does this make any difference from the perspective of international law? Certainly not. Were the moshavim in the Jordan Valley not built on the land of residents who were disinherited? Have they not crushed the surrounding residents?
With regard to the Golan Heights, we went up another level in the word game we play with ourselves. There are no hitnahaluyot there at all. Why? Because we decided so. There are towns, kibbutzim and moshavim, just like in the Jezreel Valley. But no word game or Knesset legislation can alter the unequivocal fact that the Golan Heights is occupied Syrian land and all of its residents are settlers and that international law regards them as criminals.
This phenomenon reached its peak in Jerusalem, which will celebrate 40 years of its "unification" this year. This act of unification was an act of occupation and the fact that a charming and charismatic figure like Kollek presided over it does not change a thing. Kollek demolished a neighborhood in the Old City and built the new neighborhoods on Palestinian land for Jews only – apartheid at its worst – and this should also be remembered in the balance of his considerable achievements.
The Jerusalem mayor Kollek left behind is a divided and wounded city, despite and because of its enormous development, replete with explosives that will yet explode in our faces. In fact, it was never unified. Like any colonialist city, there is a dark backyard for the natives. To this day, most Israelis do not set foot in Palestinian neighborhoods and the Palestinians avoid Jewish neighborhoods. The city remains divided, despite all of the lofty words about its unification for eternity. Regarding equality, there is nothing to say of course. It is sufficient to travel to the Shuafat camp or even to Sheikh Jarrah to note the outrageous disparity between the services in the eastern and western parts of the city.
Societal neglect, piles of garbage, no playgrounds or community centers, no sidewalk and no streetlights. Gaza in Jerusalem, all on the basis of abominable ethnic discrimination. This did not begin with Ehud Olmert nor with Uri Lupolianski. This began with the wily Kollek. A city whose rule in the Palestinian section is conducted through the strength of arms, with surprise checkpoints and hundreds of violent Border Policemen routinely patrolling the streets, and whose residents are subject to prohibitions that violate their fundamental liberties, is not a "unified" city. Teddy is responsible for this.
The history of the occupation, which has already lasted more than twice the amount of time than the years the state existed without it, is full of "men of peace" from the "left" who are responsible for this injustice. What would the settlement enterprise be without Yigal Allon and Moshe Dayan, Golda Meir and Yisrael Galili and, of course, Shimon Peres? Kollek must now be added to them, belatedly. He brought the wide world to Jerusalem but only to its Jewish part. He loved his city very much, and built and developed it in an impressive way, but on the downtrodden back of half of its residents. Moshe Amirav wrote in his article on Thursday ("Division, where unification failed") that Kollek said to him in his waning years: "We failed to unify the city. Tell Ehud Barak that I support dividing it." Better late than never, but why did we not hear a word about this in the lofty eulogies?